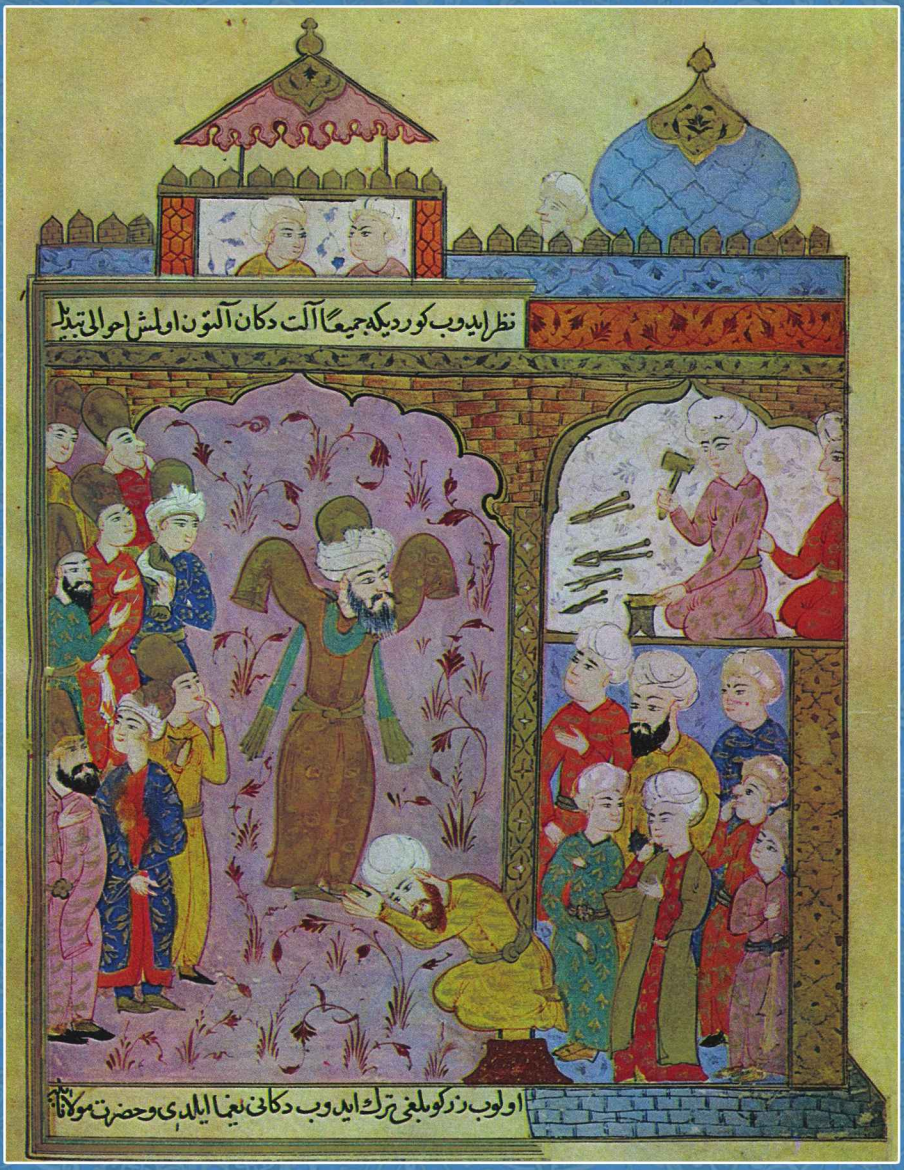
The Philosophy of Ecstasy

Rumi and the Sufi Tradition



Edited by Leonard Lewisohn

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Rūmī in Ecstasy. From an illustrated manuscript of the *Tercüme-i Menakıb-ı Sevakıb* ("Translation of the Legends of the Luminaries"), which Mahmud Dede translated into Ottoman from a Persian abridgement of Aflākī's *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*. The manuscript is preserved in Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi (TSM R. 1479) and is dated 1599.

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Leonard Lewisohn

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The Philosophy of Ecstasy:
Rumi and the Sufi Tradition
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In Memory of Gökalp Kâmil
d. July 11, 2012

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Rūmī's Life and Works

The dawn of the seventh Muslim and thirteenth Christian century marked the birth of the golden age of Sufism with the appearance of one of the most celebrated Persian poets in Islamic history: Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (1207-73), better known to posterity as *Mawlānā* ("Our master") and *Rūmī* ("the Anatolian"). He was born in the city of Vakhsh (modern-day Tajikistan), which is about 150 miles southwest from Balkh in present-day Afghanistan.[1] His father, Bahā' al-Dīn Valad (1150-1231), was an eminent jurist, famous preacher, and Sufi teacher. In 1212, when Rūmī was around five years of age, the Valad family moved to Balkh; a year or so later they moved to Samarqand (in modern-day Uzbekistan); and sometime around 1216 they left the region for good just before the Mongol invasion of Khurāsān in 1221. They first visited Nīshāpūr in northern Iran, then went to Baghdad, from where they proceeded to Kūfa and then onto Arabia, where they performed the pilgrimage. Thence they traveled northwest to Damascus in Syria, before finally settling in Malatya in south-eastern Turkey in 1217.

In 1218 Bahā' al-Dīn Valad, who made his living as a Sunnī preacher and teacher of the Ḥanifī juridical sect, persuaded the princess who ruled Erzincan (in eastern Anatolia) to build him a Sufi *khānaqāh* in the nearby town of Āqshahr where the family now settled and where he taught general law for four years. Bahā al-Dīn and family then moved to Lārende (modern-day Karaman) in southern Turkey, where he now obtained another teaching position. In Lārende in 1224, his son Jalāl al-Dīn, aged 17, married Gawhar Khātun by whom he had two sons, Sulṭān Valad, and 'Alā al-Dīn. The Seljuk prince 'Alā al-Dīn Kay Qubād I (r. 1219-37) then invited Bahā' al-Dīn Valad to come to the city of Konya (some 60 miles north of Lārende) where in 1229 the family settled and he was appointed professor in a local *madrasa*. Bahā al-Dīn Walad quickly became known as one of the chief learned men in the city, and when he died in 1231, seven days of public mourning were decreed. Rūmī's father left to

[1] This biographical overview is a much revised version of my article on "Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī" in David Thomas and Alex Mallet (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History* (Leiden and Boston: Brill 2011), IV, pp. 486–503. Much of the biographical details about Rūmī are drawn from Franklin D. Lewis' magisterial work: *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi* (Oxford: Oneworld 2000).

posterity a diary entitled *Ma'ārif* ("Mystical intimations"), which reveals the rapturous, ecstatic nature of his Sufi mysticism.

Jalāl al-Dīn, aged 24, immediately succeeded to his father's position in the same *madrasa*, where he taught general classes on religion, literature, and theology. In the following year (1232), Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq, who hailed from the city of Tirmidh on the Oxus near Vakhsh, where he had been one of Bahā al-Dīn Walad's chief disciples, arrived in Konya and initiated the young professor into the mysteries of Sufism, becoming his spiritual guide for the next eight years until his death in 1240. Jalāl al-Dīn, who had already become his father's successor in the exoteric "husk" of Islamic law, through the esoteric education vouchsafed by Muḥaqqiq thereby received the "kernel" of the esoteric teachings of Islamic spirituality. During his tutelage under Muḥaqqiq, Jalāl al-Dīn also spent a number of years in Damascus and Aleppo studying the Islamic sciences in the best colleges of the day; it is following this that he became renowned as *Mawlānā*.

Sometime during the next four years, his wife Gawhar Khātūn passed away and the widowed professor married Kerrā Khātūn, herself a widow, by whom he had a son and a daughter. Biographers recount that during these years he held four different professorial positions at four different colleges in Konya, where he taught religious sciences. In his "Seven Sermons" (*Majālis-i sab'a*), a collection of religious homilies and lectures probably delivered by Rūmī between 1230 and 1245,[2] fascinating vignettes of our future ecstatic poet appear, bravely diving into abstruse theological debates, expostulating on juridical minutiae of ethical paradoxes, while exhorting his audience atop a seminary pulpit in the traditional Muslim preacher's robes.

On November 2, 1244 another spiritual master, Shams-i Tabrīzī, appeared in Konya and soon became Rūmī's inseparable companion. Shams was a Qur'ānic scholar, a theologian of intense passion and learning, an ascetic and highly advanced adept in Sufi mysteries. Rūmī soon became infatuated by Shams' ecstatic Sufi teachings and abandoned his duties as a professor of Islamic law and religion. Although he was in his early sixties, Shams was an *enfant terrible* whose bohemian wildness and ecstatic utterances none but the most sophisticated and wisest adepts could fathom. Eventually, Shams' presence in Konya provoked both the wrath of conventional Muslims in the city and the rancor and jealousy of Rūmī's alienated disciples. He was forced to flee, disappearing forever (some say he was murdered) in 1248.

[2] Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, p. 293.

Although his entry into and exit from Mawlānā's life lasted only four years, Shams' effect on Rūmī's being—and Islamic mystical literature—was incalculable. Mostly inspired by this association, Rūmī began to compose long lyrical poems. Eventually these lyrics (known as *ghazals*) turned into a collection that became known as *Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* ("Shams' book of verse") because many of its *ghazals* contained his name in the final signature line of the poem. Absorbed in love for Shams, whom he extolled with many encomia, Rūmī adopted his master's name as his own *nom de plume*.

The *Dīvān-i Shams* is generally acknowledged by literary historians to be the most celebrated collection of ecstatic lyrical love poetry in world literature, which in metaphysical insight, expression of spiritual realities, deep wisdom, and philosophical subtleties, remains unrivaled by any other book of verse in the world's mystical poetic literature. From the standpoint of quantity, at over 36,360 couplets, the *Dīvān-i Shams* is the largest collection of mystical lyrics, containing the widest, most diverse pattern of meters ever composed by any Persian poet. It features 3,229 *ghazals* varying in length (anywhere between 4 to 60 couplets), along with 44 strope poems (*tarjī'āt*) totaling 1,700 verses, and 1,983 quatrains (*rubā'iyāt*).[3]

Stoically shaking off his grief at Shams' loss, Rūmī next transferred his attachment to an illiterate but spiritually advanced goldsmith named Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb, who had been the successor of his first teacher Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq. For the next ten years (1248-58), during the decade of his devotion to Zarkūb, Rūmī perfected the whirling dance ceremony of the Sufis called *samā'* (the movements of which had originally been choreographed by Shams) that later caused his Order, the *Mawlawiyya*, to be dubbed by Westerners as "the Whirling Dervishes." During this period, Rūmī betrothed his son Sulṭān Valad to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's daughter and appointed Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as his deputy, and in his honor composed for him over 70 *ghazals*.

At the same time Rūmī continued as before delivering lectures and sermons, a service that he performed until his death, after which they were assembled by an unknown compiler. These sermons, entitled *Fīhi mā fīh* ("Discourses"), a miscellany of 71 extemporaneous homilies, constitute

[3] *Kulliyāt-i Shams yā Dīwān-i kabīr az guftār-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad mashhūr bi Mawlawī, ba tashīḥāt wa ḥawwashī*, ed. Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar (Tehran: Sipihr, 1363 AHsh./1984), 10 vols. in 9. See Furūzānfar's introduction, pp. *vav-yav*, for a comprehensive and detailed discussion of the provenance and significance of all the extant MSS. of the work, as well as Lewis' *Rumi: Past and Present*, pp. 297-99 for a survey of all the key manuscripts.

"an indispensable source for both the thought of Rumi and his relations with the political figures of his day."[4]

In around 1256, Rūmī began to compose the *Mathnawī*, his long epic mystical poem in rhyming couplets. Popularly known as the "Qur'ān in Persian," the *Mathnawī* is the longest poem in the Persian language and "possibly the longest single-authored 'mystical' poem ever written."[5] Not only is there nothing like it in Western spirituality, but the poem far excels its antecedents in Persian poetry—the similar *mathnawī* poems composed by Sanā'ī (d. 525/1131 or 545/1150), Niẓāmī (d. 598/1202), and 'Aṭṭār (d. 618/1221)—in scope, scale, and conception.[6] In the introduction to his monumental English translation of the *Mathnawī*, R.A. Nicholson adjudicated:

> Judged by modern standards, the *Mathnawí* is a very long poem: it contains almost as many verses as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* together, and about twice as many as the *Divina Commedia*; and these comparisons make it appear shorter than it actually is, since every verse of the *Mathnawí* has twenty-two syllables, whereas the hexameter may vary from thirteen to seventeen, and the *terza rima*, like the Spenserian stanza, admits only ten or eleven in each verse, so that the *Mathnawí* with 25,700 verses is in reality a far more extensive work than the *Faerie Queen* with 33,500.[7]

The macro-compositional structure of the *Mathnawī* conveys the structure and symbolism of the spiritual world through three hidden levels of ring composition (the level of the discourse, the book, and the work as a whole), every part of the poem being connected by mirroring parallelism and chiasmus.[8] Inimitable in its poetic art, in the *mathnawī* genre at least, no subsequent poet in Persian has produced anything comparable and of equivalent depth of hermeneutical sophistication, theosophical insight, or breadth of subject matter. The profound theosophical resonances secreted

[4] Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, p. 292.

[5] Alan Williams (trans.), *Rumi: Spiritual Verses, The First Book of the* Masnavi-ye ma'navi (London: Penguin Books 2006), introduction, p. xvi.

[6] Simon Weightman and Seyed Ghahreman Safavi, *Rumi's Mystical Design: Reading The* Mathnawī, *Book One* (Albany: SUNY, 2009), introduction, p. 3.

[7] *The Mathnawí of Jalálu'ddín Rúmi, edited from the oldest manuscripts available with critical notes, translation, and commentary*, by Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1926 [reprinted many times]), vol. I, introduction, p. xiii.

[8] Weightman and Safavi, *Rumi's Mystical Design*, pp. 8-9.

within many of the *Mathnawī*'s verses and the multiple levels of meaning found in the poem's tales make it still the most frequently commented-on Sufi poem in Persian, its verses being cited more than any other poet by Islamic philosophers and metaphysicians as *bon mots* or used as pithy summations of mystical insights to illustrate their doctrines.

In Turkey, for instance, between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries some ten important commentaries on it alone were written. In each of the lodges (*tekkes*) of the Mevlevi Sufi Order founded by Rūmī's son Sulṭān Valad (there were 14 large Mevlevi lodges in major cities throughout Ottoman Turkey, with 76 minor lodges in smaller towns[9]), a qualified instructor in the *Mathnawī* (called *Mathnawī-khʷān*) held a professorial Chair. Insofar as Persian maintained its position as the sacred liturgical language of the Order for several centuries (the *Mathnawī* was not translated into Turkish until the late eighteenth century),[10] by the mid-sixteenth century Mevlevi centers where the *Mathnawī* was taught in Persian could be found as far afield as Nicosia in Cyprus, Tripoli in Libya, Jerusalem in Palestine, Beirut in Lebanon, Aleppo and Damascus in Syria, Cairo in Egypt, and Athens in Greece. For eight centuries, from the northernmost borders of Central Asia down to Calcutta in India, and from Ottoman-ruled Sarajevo in Western Europe and east to Isfahan in Persia, the *Mathnawī* served a vehicle to convey Sufism's ecumenical teachings, in this respect being unrivaled by any other Islamic work. It is said that even the Brahmins of Bengal used to dress like Sufis and recite Rūmī's *Mathnawī* up until the mid-nineteenth century.[11] Today, largely thanks to the popular poetic renditions of the *Mathnawī* into contemporary American English by Coleman Barks, since the early 1990s Rūmī has been the best-selling poet in English in the United States.

Upon Zarkūb's demise in 1258, Rūmī devoted his attentions to Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī, a man from the middle classes of Konya, an ascetic and a Sufi shaykh in his own right who was also the director of a Sufi chivalric (*futuwwa*) organization. Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī had been a close friend of Shams and a long-time disciple of Rūmī as well. The *Mathnawī* was largely dedicated and dictated to Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī, whose spiritual eminence is lauded all through this immense poem.

[9] Ibid., p. 25.

[10] Victoria Holbrook, "Diverse Tastes in the Spiritual Life: Textual Play in the Diffusion of Rumi's Order," in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism,* Vol. 2: *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), p. 100.

[11] Hafiz Md. Tahir Ali, "Importance of Persian Sufi Literature in Modern India," *Indo-Iranica*, XLVII/1-4 (1994), p. 41.

When finally Rūmī died on December 17, 1273, it is said that the Sufi philosopher Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), the mystical poet Fakhr al-Dīn 'Iraqī (d. 1282), and some other great Sufis were sitting together, remembering Mawlānā. Qūnawī remarked:

> If Bāyazīd and Junayd had been alive at this time, they would have seized the hem of this victorious man and would have considered this a boon: he is the major domo of Muḥammadan poverty, and we taste it through his mediation.

The funeral prayers were led by Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, the stepson and spiritual successor of Ibn 'Arabī. Christians and Jews participated in the wake, each according to their own rite, for Rūmī had been on good terms with all religions.

Today, thanks largely to several hagiographies and *vitae* consecrated to him in the immediate decades after his demise, much more is known about Rūmī's biography and social history than nearly any other classical Persian poet. Foremost among these biographies is Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad-i Aflākī's (d. 1360) massive *Manāqib al-'ārifīn* ("Virtues of the Gnostics"), a hagiographical account of Rūmī, his family, and successors which paints a picture of "a man rather than an immaculate and infallible spiritual being." Despite scores of fabulous *mirabilia* narrated about him, reading Aflākī one discovers a Sufi master who was "responsible for a large extended family, subject to all the conflicts and dynamics that family life entails, . . . [leader of] a large spiritual community which brought with it a number of challenges, difficulties, rivalries and intrigues among political dignitaries and even among the disciples themselves."[12]

Rūmī's correspondence (*Maktubāt*) likewise reveals him not to have been a reclusive ascetic withdrawn from the world and its affairs but a mystic actively engaged in helping friends and disciples. Reading this collection of eloquent epistles written in highly Arabized Persian to local theologians, governmental officials, disciples, and acolytes, one discovers "an extended community of disciples and family members who looked to Rumi as an intercessor, not only with God, but also with men of state and influence. He sought to help them in their economic and communal affairs

[12] From Lloyd Ridgeon's review of Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad-e Aflākī, *The Feats of the Knowers of God* (*Manāqeb al-'āreftn*), translated from the Persian by John O'Kane (Leiden: Brill, 2002) in *Mawlana Rumi Review*, vol. 1 (2010), pp. 166-67.

and wrote recommendation letters, introducing individuals to potential patrons and asking for assistance."[13]

* * *

Although over the past seven hundred years Rūmī's popularity has waxed rather than waned, with appreciation of Rūmī's literary and spiritual legacy flourishing for centuries in Central Asia, Iran, India, Anatolia and many other lands dominated by Persianate culture, the study, translation, and interpretation of his oeuvre has only recently enjoyed a comparable welcome from a Western audience.[14] In the Near East and the Indian Subcontinent—Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, India, Pakistan, much of India—the study of his poetry flourishes today, with novels, plays, films, scholarly monographs being written, conferences on an annual basis devoted to his memory convened, and universities and institutes of higher education named after him. New editions and selections from his poetry, whether in translation or the original Persian, yearly appear in print. Specialist journals devoted to Rūmī have been launched in Persian and Turkish over the past decade in Iran and Turkey respectively.

In 2009, the *Mawlana Rumi Review*, a journal exclusively devoted to the academic study, literary translation, historical legacy, and theosophical thought of Rūmī, was launched at the British Library in London. Supported by the Rumi Institute at the Near East University in Northern Cyprus, with articles in English and French, this is the first journal exclusively devoted to Rūmī in any European language.

The present collection of essays on Rūmī, written by a formidable roster of specialist scholars of diverse provenance, hailing from Europe, the United States, and Iran, all of whom are specialists in the translation and interpretation of Rūmī's thought, is a humble contribution to the ongoing efflorescence of the academic study of Rūmī's poetry and thought. *The Philosophy of Ecstasy: Rumi and the Sufi Tradition* largely aspires to situate Rūmī's mystical thought and poetry in the context of the Sufi tradition to which he belonged. The volume is divided into four major sections: (i) Études in Ecstasy: Leitmotifs of Rūmī's Sufi Poetics; (ii) Rūmī's Sufi Ecumenism; (iii) Historical and Theological Perspectives

[13] Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, p. 295.

[14] For an overview of the reception history of Rūmī in the West see my "Editor's Note" to *Mawlana Rumi Review*, I, pp. 11-15; for a detailed coverage, see Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, Part V.

on Rūmī's Oeuvre; and (iv) Designs of Love: Sense and Structure in Rūmī's *Mathnawī*.

The keynote essay in the volume provides a lovely overture to many of the major themes of Rūmī's poetic theology and mystical teachings. In this exquisite essay, Husayn Ilahi-Ghomshei, perhaps the foremost popular mystical theologian in Iran today, divides what he calls the "Symphony of Rūmī" into a dozen different movements, *viz.*: Prayer and Supplication, Poetry as Prophecy, Qur'ānic Exegesis, Prophetology, Music and Dance (*Samā'*), Blind Imitation vs. Self-Realization, Sense and Syntax, the Eternal Feminine, Predestination and Freewill, the Spirit, Death, and, of course, Love. He discusses briefly the recurring melodic themes within these twelve movements, illustrating each of them by copious quotations from Rūmī's poetry.

The next essay on "Principles of the Philosophy of Ecstasy in Rūmī's Poetry" subsumes and superscribes the signature theme (and title)—ecstasy—of the whole collection. In this essay, an attempt is made to link Rūmī's poetic inspiration to the spiritual psychology of *samā'* in general and to ecstasy (*wajd*) in particular and thus demonstrate how deeply his poetry, both in the *Mathnawī* and the *Dīvān-i Shams*, was touched by the sanctity of music and song. Rūmī's poetry is also shown to have given poetic expression to many of the key doctrines of ecstasy found in the tenth-century Baghdad School of Sufism. The inspiration of Rūmī's poetry, it is argued, largely derived from the contemplative discipline of the *samā'*, the Sufi concert, which itself belongs to the poetic discourse of the "science of mystical states" (*'ilm al-aḥwāl*) in Sufism. The predominance of the element of ecstasy and joy in Rūmī's poetry, and the fact that it possesses greater diversity of musical rhythms and melodies than exist in any other Persian poet, are shown to be directly related to his predilection for the Sufi *samā'* gathering. That *samā'* was the key essential contemplative discipline animating the incredible flowering of Rūmī's lyric poetry is further confirmed by its place as the keynote of the Mevlevi Order's sacred liturgy and doxology under the direction of his son and successor Sulṭān Valad.

The second section devoted to "Rūmī's Sufi Ecumenism" aims to summarize how the Sage of Konya's poetic teachings remain globally relevant to contemporary man in diverse—psychological, emotional, social, historical, religious, literary, and metaphysical—contexts.

Highlighting the fact that Christians in Anatolia were no less omnipresent than Muslims, Roderick Grierson reminds us that Rūmī did not live in isolation as a Muslim among other members of a purely Muslim elite. By exploring two topics in particular, "'One Shrine Alone': Chris-

tians, Sufis, and the Vision of Mawlānā" attempts to complement several excellent articles about Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Christianity. The first topic he raises is that of religious diversity in Anatolia during the Seljuk and Beylik periods. The second concerns the obstacles that modern scholars have encountered when attempting to understand this diversity. The result of his researches helps to provide an introduction to the historical milieu in which Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī lived and to the attraction that he exerted upon followers of other religions as well as upon Muslims.

The second essay in this section, by Kabir Helminski, shows how insights gleaned from the ancient mystical psychology secreted within the tale of the Lion and the Hare at the beginning of the first book of the *Mathnawī* remain relevant to understanding the social psychology underlying modern man's complex problems. Using three symbols in Rūmī's poetry (a mirror, a compass or astrolabe, and a touchstone), Helminski illustrates how these are used by the poet to represent internal, psychological realities which serve to orient us towards that higher consciousness which is called by names such as Universal Reason or the heart.

The third part of the volume addresses various historical and theological perspectives on Rūmī's oeuvre, featuring three essays.

In his "Towards a Chronology of the Poems in the *Dīvān-i Shams*: A Prolegomenon for a Periodization of Rumi's Literary Oeuvre," Franklin Lewis attempts a preliminary investigation of the historical genesis of Rūmī's works, both prose and poetry. Although he admits that the primary biographical evidence of the poems and discourses can only be interpreted in the framework of the hagiographies written about Rūmī, he criticizes the mystical perspective that views Rūmī's poems solely as "emerging orphically, outside of time." On the basis of internal evidence and historical allusions within his poetry he shows how that much new information can be gleaned from attentive readings of the primary source documents that were composed during Rūmī's lifetime.

In his study of "The Revival of the Spiritual Dimension of the *Sunna* in Rūmī's *Mathnawī*," Shahram Pazouki focuses on Rūmī's theology. He shows how the poet used the term "Sunnī" in its original Islamic sense throughout his *Mathnawī*, which is why his approach to the Shī'ite-Sunnī conflict is so radically non-denominational and trans-sectarian. According to the *poeta doctus* of Konya, the genuinely "orthodox" "Sunnī" is a mystic endowed with the contemplative vision of the heart, one who is not prejudiced by sensual perceptions nor biased by his personal opinions based on fanciful conjecture. Being a Sufi thinker, as Pazouki demonstrates, Rūmī avoided using the term in its normal theological denotation (to refer to any follower of Ash'arite theology), but instead emphasized

the mystical dimension of the *Sunna* which takes precedence over literalistic *Sharī'a*-centric dimensions.

In the final essay in this section, Iraj Anvar and Peter Chelkowski explore how certain stories from Rumi's *Mathnawī* were interpreted by the popular Shī'ite theatrical genre known as *ta'ziyih* (passion play), the sole form of serious drama to have developed in the world of Islam. To do this, the authors analyze two passion plays based on Rūmī's *Mathnawī*. The first is a theatrical production (*ta'ziyih*) of *Moses and the Wandering Dervish*, based on the ecumenical tale of Moses and the Shepherd in Book II of Rūmī's *Mathnawī*,[15] and the second a play called "Manṣūr Ḥallāj, Shams of Tabriz, and Mūllā of Rūm," both of which utilize a great number of verses from the *Mathnawī*.

Part IV of the volume, entitled "Designs of Love: Sense and Structure in Rūmī's *Mathnawī*," explores the monumental poem that is the best loved of Rūmī's masterpieces in four essays.

In the first essay, Alan Williams maintains that the *Mathnawī* was itself aimed at inducing in the reader, through contemplating the text, a reparation of the heart by means of what he calls "Open Heart Surgery: The Poetic Operation of Love." Illustrating his thesis by numerous quotations from various books of the *Mathnawī*, he demonstrates how Rūmī, following in the footsteps of Aḥmad Ghazāli's *Savāniḥ*, through a "strategy of didactic intensification" intended to make the mysteries of love accessible to a much wider audience. Analyzing various references to pain, ailments, sicknesses, medicines, physicians, and doctors throughout the vast poem, he diagnoses the *Mathnawī* as having the curative effect first of engaging the imagination (utilizing the rhetoric of storytelling), then immobilizing the intellect, before lastly becoming the heart surgeon's anesthetic for the heart suffering from separation, alienation, and emotional disturbance in order to bring it back to full health.

In his "The Ascension of the Word: Rhetoric and Reader Engagement in Rūmī's *Mathnawī*," James Morris focuses on the first 35 verses of Rūmī's *Spiritual Couplets*, the so-called "Song of the Reed" overture. He descries four successive hermeneutical and literary perspectives which the poet weaves together in these verses: (i) different speaking voices, audiences, tonalities, and resulting perspectives; (ii) the unfolding inner drama that the succession of those contrasting perspectives poses; (iii) the chiasmic juxtaposition of each of the poem's eight paired and contrasting sections; and (iv) several key thematic and existential "touchstones." Drawing on Simon Weightman's recent discoveries of the linking chi-

[15] This tale is discussed in my essay in this volume, p. 54-55.

asmic structures and topical parallelisms secreted within the *Mathnawī*, Morris reveals that throughout these 25 opening verses can be found a master-key to the chiasmic structures developed in the twelve, quite visibly coherent and constitutive story-cycles of Book I and each succeeding Book.

In the volume's penultimate essay: "Wakened by the Dove's Trill: Structure and Meaning in the Preface to Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, Book IV," Carl W. Ernst discusses a love poem from the secular Arabic tradition which frames the Sufi dialogue in Persian that opens Book IV of the *Mathnawī*. Rūmī's citation of this poem is an excellent example of Sufi appropriation of the secular court poetry of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid eras. Prof. Ernst reveals how Rūmī adhered to the model of the introduction in Arabic literature (*muqaddima*), which had evolved to constitute a three-part literary genre consisting of the invocation of the name of God (*basmala*), the statement for the reasons for composing the book, and the closing lines of praise.

The final essay of the volume: "Spiritual Progression in Books One and Two of the *Mathnawī*," addresses Rūmī's use of two well-established literary conventions: *chiasmus*, in which the second half of a literary work reflects the first half in reverse but at a higher level; and *parallelism*, which is the literary exploitation of the non-linear relationship of correspondence of literary elements (whether these be phonological, lexical, semantic, thematic, etc.). Simon Weightman reveals that not only are the sections in each discourse of the *Mathnawī* organized by parallelism and chiasmus, but so are the discourses in each book, and the books themselves also so organized. The surface, literal text itself, moving sequentially from verse to verse and theme to theme, represents the mundane world of the senses, corresponding to the level of moralistic exposition. The spiritual level which is expressed through ring-composition necessarily employs chiasmus and parallelism, the literary mode that can best illustrate the eternal spiritual world, symbolized by the circle. The author thus exposes how these literary conventions were used by Rūmī to articulate occult spiritual realities.

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For those of us who do not live in Turkey, the generous and enthusiastic support of politicians and civil servants at every level of government for the study of a mystical poet is truly inspiring. In particular, I should like to express my gratitude to the Municipality of Greater Konya, the Konya Museum Directorate, the Konya Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, and the Konya Provincial Government of the Republic of Turkey for their assistance in organizing the symposium. Without constant advice and encouragement from three successive directors of the Mevlana Museum—Erdoğan Erol, Yusuf Benli, and Naci Bakırcı—such a project would have remained completely impractical. As on so many previous occasions, our debt to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey and to the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Nicosia is incalculable. We are no less grateful to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

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The Philosophy of Ecstasy: Rumi and the Sufi Tradition is gratefully dedicated to the convener of the symposium at Konya. Gökalp Kâmil, the founder of the Rumi Institute, passed away in July 2012 before he could see his efforts given more permanent life in print.

—Leonard Lewisohn, June 15, 2014

A Note on Transliteration

Transliteration of Persian and Arabic words in this book follows the transliteration table of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Persian words of Arabic origin, such as *Mathnawī*, generally, but not exclusively, use "w" instead of "v" for the Arabic letter *wa* (و). Likewise, the letter *zad* (ض) is generally, but not exclusively, rendered as "ḍ" (as in Arabic) instead of ż. The diphthongs are consistently rendered as "aw" and "ay."

PART I

Études in Ecstasy: Leitmotifs of Rūmī's Poetics

The Symphony of Rūmī

HUSAYN ILAHI-GHOMSHEI

Prologue

In the following essay I have approached the poetic oeuvre of Rūmī as a grand symphony played entirely by a single instrument—the reed-flute (*nay*). I divide up the symphony into twelve different movements which together subsume the major themes of Rūmī's teachings. The various movements of this symphony, as will be shown, are constituted of certain recurring melodic themes, such as the Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), Freewill and Predestination, Love vs. Reason, philosophy and mysticism, the divine feminine, the soul's immortality, punishment and reward, and, of course, love (the most important movement that constitutes the key-note of the entire symphony), played to the harmonic accompaniment of memorable anecdotes, sage adages, and sweet tales.

More than any other Persian poet, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's poetry is pervaded by ecstatic movement, filled with music, singing, dancing, foot-stamping, and hand-clapping. Gustave Mauler, the famous German composer, has written a celebrated symphony known as the "Symphony of the Thousands" because it requires a thousand musicians to perform it properly. Rūmī, on the other hand, for the sake of a single instrument, the reed-pipe or *ney* usually played by humble peasants, has composed thousands upon thousands of lyrical and didactic verses filled with points of philosophical wisdom, tales, and anecdotes, all of which are meant to be sung and set to music. In this respect, one could label his *Mathnawī* and *Dīvān-i Shams* together as a "Symphony of the Sixty-thousands," which are roughly the sum total of the verses in both collections. Whether the feet of his meters are arranged in *adagio* or *allegro* rhythms, the musicality of Rūmī's verse is permeated by a sweet concord, sustained by a spiritual ambience that expresses a self-perpetuating joyous harmony.

I. Prayer and Supplication

In the first movement of this symphony can be found a series of subtle mystical and romantic prayers and supplications with profound philo-

sophical overtones. The following verses from the *Mathnawī* can be cited in this regard:

That place to the soul, God, won't you disclose
Where speech without a word is born and grows,
So that the pure soul headlong will then race
To non-existence's vast open space!
A wide and vast realm of magnificence
From which this false world gains at sustenance.[1]

* * *

Teach us, Dear Friend, fine words that we can say
To gain your mercy every time we pray!
Both prayers and their answers come from You,
Security's from You and terror too.
If we have erred, correct ways please now teach!
You're the Corrector and the Lord of Speech.
With alchemy you can transmute what's vile,
Transform a stream of blood into the Nile;
Your work is to perform such alchemy:
No one else knows this special chemistry.[2]

II. Poetry as Prophecy

Another movement of Rūmī's symphony relates to the prophetic dimension of poetry. It can be said that the message of Rūmī's poetry is "prophetic" if we understand the term to refer to the prophetic faculty in the general rather than the particular sense. The "prophetic" facet of Rūmī's achievement as a poet has been famously summed up by the celebrated Safavid Sufi poet and theologian Shaykh Bahā'ī (d. 1030/1621), who it is said composed the following verses in homage to Rūmī's *Mathnawī*:

That poem of the spirit,
the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī,

[1] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I, vv. 3092-94, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book One* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), I, v. 3105-07 (corresponding to the Isti'lamī edition).

[2] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, II, vv. 691-95, trans. J. Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book Two* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), II, vv. 694-98 (corresponding to the Isti'lamī edition).

Is all a holy writ,
in Persian the Qur'ān.
I won't profess that marvelous
colossus a prophet
But do confess
his work's a sacred text.[3]

The *Mathnawī* itself is a deeply "prophetic poem." Its prophetic nature is addressed directly by the poet himself in various passages in different books of the poem. In the third book of the *Mathnawī*, for example, while telling the tale of the "Mosque that Slew its Guests," Rūmī drops the thread of his story to contend with the caviling of an asinine critic of the poem:

This yarn of mine has yet to end—yet look,
A putrid stench of smoke from envious folk
Flies up—a goose sticks out his head from his ass-
House's door, and railing like a bitch curses:
"This *Mathnawī* is vulgar verse, a shabby
Work of old prophets' tales, an idle fancy
That's got no talk of higher mysteries
Towards which careen the coursers of the saints,
Nor talk of stages of the Way—from self-
Restraint to annihilation of the self,
Ascent up step by step, each stage by stage:
Their *differentia* with commentary
Spelled out: the hows and whys of each degree
By means of which the heart's adepts fledge wings
And soar aloft to supernatural things."
The pagans too lampooned the holy scripture
When it came down with such a caricature.[4]

Responding to his poem's critic, Rūmī compares his *Mathnawī* to the holy Qur'ān, finding a similarity between the objections which critics

[3] Translation by Leonard Lewisohn (hereafter LL). The author of these extremely famous and oft-cited *mathnawī* verses (often ascribed to either Shaykh Bahā'ī or Jāmī but found in the collected works of neither poet) in praise of Rūmī's *Mathnawī* is unknown. – ED.

[4] *The Mathnawí of Jalálu'ddín Rúmi, edited from the oldest manuscripts available with critical notes, translation, and commentary*, ed. R. A. Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1925-1940), III, vv. 4227, 4232-37, trans. LL.

assailed the Prophet with in respect to the Qur'ān and the dissent and hostility expressed by critics of the *Mathnawī*. The aspersions cast on the poem, Rūmī remonstrates, first strike the critic himself, showing up his poor judgment. Paraphrasing a verse of the Qur'ān, Rūmī then justifies the verity of the inspiration of his own poem as follows:

> God said, "As 'simple' as it seems, the holy text
> To you, then go and write a chapter up like it—
> You *jinn,* you men and all you learned experts
> Make it your task: write up but one such 'simple' verse."[5]

The whole aim of Rūmī's work and his entire mission as a "prophet" appears revealed in this same verse cited above by the critic of the Qur'ān who had ridiculed—yet unknowingly complimented—the *Mathnawī* as being merely "stories of the prophets and their followers." Throughout all his works, Rūmī's struggle is to instill in his readers a faith in divine love, and to persuade—or, if you like, proselytize—people to follow the prophets in general and the seal of the prophets (Muḥammad) in particular. However, his understanding of the message of the prophets is an intensely interiorized one. His viewpoint is that of a dedicated esotericist. In the *Mathnawī*, instead of the dogmatic teaching of fanatical devotees of scriptures as they are recited by bigoted clerics who thump their holy texts and harangue crowds with sermons threatening damnation by fire and brimstone, Rūmī insists that the message of the Qur'ān is meaningless unless approached and interpreted individually by each person, and appreciated through the faculty of spiritual taste or *heart-savor* (*dhawq*) based on their own unique apprehension and inspired consciousness:

> Which exegesis is correct?
> The one that warms you up,
> which fills you up with hope,
> ardor, stirs you to act,
> that makes you venerate, accord respect;
> But if it dulls your wits and makes
> You slack, that exegesis is perverse.
> God's word has come to warm you up and animate,
> To take the hopeless by the hands and make their heart
> Regenerate. The Qur'ān's sense is clear enough.
> Go ask the text itself its inner sense and truth

[5] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, III, vv. 4242-43, trans. LL.

Or else entreat some burnt-out soul, whose passions are
All ashes, who's lost his soul and self, laid down before
The Qur'ān limb and life, until he himself is
The Qur'ān in his vital spirit's deepest essence.[6]

III. Qur'ānic Exegesis

Another "movement" in Rūmī's heavenly symphony relates to his work as an exegete and commentator on the Qur'ān and interpretation of all the various tales, legends, and visions that are found therein. Rūmī's knack at original esoteric exegesis (*ta'wīl*) of certain verses and passages of the Qur'ān, considered as a book of Revelation in the widest sense of the word, is especially noteworthy. By the power of his poetic genius, the "Islamic" scripture is transformed by Rūmī into a "supra-Islamic" text of timelessly contemporary relevance, the ecumenical import of which concerns all humanity and is not confined exclusively to the community of Muslim believers. For instance, referring to a tale found originally in the Torah and the Old Testament,[7] but which reappears later in an altered form in the Qur'ān,[8] the Prophet David, ostensibly known as one of the most notorious polygamists in human history, was said to have had seven wives and multiple concubines, yet he still coveted someone else's wife. In the Qur'ān, however, it is only mentioned that David coveted the one ewe of his neighbor, despite possessing ninety-nine of his own. The new twist which Rūmī's gives to this ancient parable is remarkable:

Although the sea's my throne, yet still I'd beg
    to have a gulp of water from a jug.
If just like David ninety ewes belonged to me
    I'd still covet to own my neighbor's only ewe.[9]

[6] Ibid., V, vv. 3125-29, trans. LL.

[7] II Samuel 11, 12.

[8] Qur'ān XXXVIII: 23-24. In the Qur'ān, the story of David's murder of Uriah (by sending him into battle at a dangerous spot where he would certainly be killed), the husband of Bathsheba, whom he then made his own concubine (II Samuel 11) is not told, but rather the parable related to David by the prophet Nathan about the poor man's one ewe taken by the wayfarer (II Samuel 12) to apprize David of his crime and bring home to him his sin. However, all the earliest Qur'ān exegetes narrate the story of David's love of Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah as having been implied in these two verses. – Ed.

[9] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, III, vv. 1953-54, trans. LL.

In Rūmī's exegesis, the Prophet David becomes a prophet of the Religion of Love, whose love is so all-inclusive as to leave no one outside the parameters of its ecumenical circle. Esoterically understood, David's love must be "one hundred percent," because to be content with any lesser—symbolically less comprehensive—love, would be merely "ninety-nine percent"; hence, a heinous infidelity. As we can see here, Rūmī gives an entirely new twist to the excessive, insatiable lust of the over-sexed polygamous male. David's lust becomes interpreted as a kind of divine intoxication, his desire becomes a virtual religious requirement and essential injunction of the Religion of Love.[10]

> In *eros* greed is glory, name and fame;
> In other things, greed's inglorious shame.[11]

The Sufi cult of beauty decrees that Love be like understanding that grows bright gazing on many truths; Rūmī believes, like Shelley, that the heart that loves and the brain that contemplates but one object alone turns the wide world into a sepulcher.[12]

Another interesting aspect of Rūmī's work as an exegete of the Muslim missal is found in his very original interpretation of one of the most commonly cited verses of the Qur'ān: "Thee alone we worship; Thee alone we entreat for help" from the Opening Chapter (*Sūra al-Fātiḥa*, I:5). In the following *ghazal*, we see how Rūmī provides his own original exegesis of this and one other verse from the Qur'ān:

> The lover's passion, drunken ways, intoxication
> And youth and all such things arrived to become
> Delightful Spring and make a close association.
>
> They had no form and then in joy conceived some formal shape.
> What's this? Just look, how subjects of imagination
> Gained shape and form, a name and local habitation.
>
> The heart is like a portal for the eye, for what
> Comes in the heart then enters in the eye, and that

[10] See my article on "The Principles of the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry," in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 77-106.

[11] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, III, v. 1955, trans. LL.

[12] See Shelley's *Epipsychidion*, vv. 160-73.

Becomes, without a doubt, recast in form and shape.

That's why the verse attests, "the day that all hidden
Thoughts are divulged." There's resurrection in the garden
When hearts expose the Chinese idol who all adore.

The message says, "Take heart—a heart of courage, if
You've got a heart. How long will it remain eclipsed,
Your heart: befouled, besmeared by earthly grime and dust?"

Come wintertime the garden prays, "Alone to you
We turn in worship." Then springtime it prays anew:
"Alone to you, to you we turn in time of need."

"To you we turn in worship" means: "As supplicants
We've come, so open up the door to sweet delights;
Please do not leave us in distress, give us no grief."

Their prayer, "we turn to you in time of need" declares:
"My fruits are overripe and burst upon their boughs;
Oh Keeper! My branches snap! Don't let this be my lot![13]

IV. Prophetology

Prophetology constitutes yet another movement in Rūmī's grand symphony. Like Ibn 'Arabī in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, throughout his *Mathnawī* and the *Dīvān-i Shams* Rūmī constantly refers to prophets who appear in the Old Testament and Qur'ān. However, unlike Ibn 'Arabī who laid special emphasis on one particular type of "wisdom" that he perceived within each prophet, Rūmī underlines certain points of pre-eminence and distinctive types of subtle knowledge that each prophet incarnates. For instance, he speaks of the Prophet Abraham's ("Ibrāhīm") station and particular characteristic as having expressed the idea of "I love not things that set"—referring to Abraham's exclamation in the Qur'ān after God displayed the kingdom of "the heavens and the earth" to him. When in the darkness of

[13] *Kulliyāt-i Shams yā Dīwān-i kabīr az guftār-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad mashhūr bi Mawlawī, ba tashḥīḥāt wa ḥawwashī*, ed. Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar (Tehran: Sipihr, 1363 AHsh./1984), vol. 4, *ghazal* 2046, vv. 21574-81, trans. LL.

the night Abraham beheld a star, he declared it to be his lord but once he saw it set, he despaired of it and turned to God Himself for guidance.[14]

For this reason, the spiritual characteristic manifested by Abraham according to Rūmī is his pure unconditional love of God without intermediaries. Abraham manifested the "Station of divine Friendship" (*maqām-i Khalīlī*)—a love that is not content with anything less than God himself for friend and beloved—the traditional name for Abraham in Muslim sources in general and the Qur'ān in particular being "God's friend" (*Khalīlu'llāh*). As Rūmī explains in the *Mathnawī*, the transient shine of the stars of mortal beings and temporal objects of love become effaced before the light of the divine sun:

> Lightning is transient, unreliable;
> You can't tell what lasts from what's temporal.
> The lightning laughs—to ask "At whom?" one might:
> It laughs at those devoted to its light.
> Such light is flawed, unlike light which is best
> That which is far beyond the East and West:
> Lightning we know *will take away men's sight*,[15]
> Eternal light though helps men in their plight.
> . . . Abraham's soul one needs, to gain the light
> Which can, through flames, bring heaven to one's sight,
> And to climb rung by rung up to the sun,
> And not be stuck in this dominion.
> Traverse the seventh heaven like God's Friend;
> Say: "*I don't love the ones that set*"[16]—ascend![17]

In the following verses from the *Dīvān-i Shams*, Rūmī refers to the Qur'ānic tale of the Prophet Jacob who mourned so much in separation from his son Joseph that his eyes turned white from weeping,[18] explaining that Jacob's paternal love for his boy was simply a foil for divine love.[19] He then refers back to the story of Abraham's spurning of transient "things

[14] Qur'ān VI:75-76.

[15] Qur'ān II:20.

[16] Qur'ān VI:75-76, in reference to the statement of Abraham discussed above.

[17] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, II, vv. 1542-45; 1557-59, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book Two*, II, vv. 1546-49; 1561-63 (corresponding to the Isti'lamī edition).

[18] Qur'ān XII:84.

[19] Confirmed in Qur'ān XII:86.

that set," followed by the tale of Abraham's destruction of the idols worshipped by the Assyrians and his subsequent punishment by Nimrūd by being thrown into a burning furnace.[20] However, Nimrūd's fire seemed to him but a cool breeze, so that he remained unaffected by its flames which did not burn him because of his piety.

Jacob made his kingdom in the soul
Of midnight's windy flowing locks
To touch with just one kiss his boy's own curls
And face. The "boy" was just an artifice
And God his aim, for as the Prophet is
My witness, there's no true lover smitten
With love for what's just human—man or woman.
For Jacob was of Abraham's own tribe:
"The stars that set"[21] and passing things for him
Were all in vain, and what "declines" like nettles in
His eye. A friend like Abraham was all he could
Accept, none else, or else he'd not have thrown
His body headlong on the pyre's flames.[22]

If Abraham emerged unscathed from the flames of Nimrūd's furnace, it was because, in symbolic terms, the hellish fires of malefactors cannot affect God's saints. God's friends turn the entire environment around them into a garden flourishing with roses and sweet basil. This symbolism is expressed succinctly in one verse of the *Mathnawī* as follows:

With Nimrud in you, don't approach the flame,
Become first Abraham to do the same.[23]

Another prophet frequently mentioned by Rūmī is Joseph (the Qur'ānic Yūsuf).[24] Whereas Ibn 'Arabī conceives of Joseph in the *Fuṣūṣ*

[20] Qur'ān XXI:51-69.

[21] See Qur'ān VI:75-76. The Arabic verb *afal* is translated here as "what declines" in the next line. – ED.

[22] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, ed. Furūzānfar, *ghazal* 1035, vv. 10915-18, trans. LL.

[23] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I, v. 1606, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book One*, I, v. 1617 (corresponding to the Isti'lamī edition).

[24] For a detailed study of whom see Annemarie Schimmel, "Yūsuf in Mawlānā Rūmī's Poetry," in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. II: *The Legacy of Mediæval Persian Sufism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), pp. 45-59. – ED.

al-ḥikam as embodying what he calls the "Wisdom of Light" (in respect to Joseph's insight into the spiritual degree of prophecy and the metaphysical imagination), in Rūmī's poetry Joseph is mainly viewed as a manifestation of divine beauty and grace. Rūmī sees the light and luminosity of Joseph's being as manifesting his interior beauty; in this respect he often uses Joseph as a symbol for divine Unity. Because all sovereignty, beauty, graciousness, wealth, and excellence are collected in Joseph's person one need not bring any other present for this Joseph, he remarks, than a mirror:

> What's the mirror of existence?
> Non-existence. Choose non-existence
> Then unless you're oblivious.
> Existence in non-existence
> One can make conspicuous:
> Hence men of riches lavish
> Their wealth on mendicants.[25]

Although Joseph is self-sufficient and needless in respect to worldly accoutrements and accomplishments, the one thing he does need is need itself—imploration and supplication—a teaching presented in Rūmī's *Discourses* as follows:

> A friend of Joseph of Egypt came to him from a far journey. Joseph asked, "What present have you brought for me?" The friend replied, "What is there that you do not possess and of which you are in need? But inasmuch as nothing exists more handsome than you, I have brought a mirror so that every moment you may gaze in it upon your own face."
>
> What is there that God most High does not possess and of which He is in need? It is necessary to bring before God most High a heart mirror-bright, so He may see His own face in it. "God looks not at your forms, nor at your deeds, but at your hearts."[26]

[25] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I: 3201-02, trans. LL.

[26] *The Discourses of Rumi*, trans. A.J. Arberry (London: Curzon Press, 1993, reprint of the1961 edition), p. 195. "God looks not . . ." is a famous Prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*). This story is also told in the *Mathnawī*, I, 3157ff.

V. Music and Dance (*Samā'*)

The most popular and charming aspect of—and certainly the most fascinating movement—in the entire symphony of Rūmī, is his praise of *samā'*, the Sufi concert involving the singing of mystical poetry accompanied by music and dance. In the opening two couplets from a famous *ghazal* devoted to *samā'*, Rūmī writes:

> *Samā'*—what's that? From lords of mystery
> a missive dispatched to us—for hearts in enmity,
> a note from them of calm serenity.
> The blossoms bud from wisdom
> winnowed in its pleasant breeze
> and like a lovely chord, its plectrum strikes
> in Being perforation.[27]

Being exiles trapped in this sentient, terrestrial realm, as these verses expound, music brings us happy tidings from a higher, transcendental realm. What are these tidings and teachings? That man in not a tattered cloak upon a stick, not a paltry thing whose labors culminate merely in death and nothingness. No, that is not his final end—for ere long these bodily shackles will be rent apart and we shall be sent forth, returned back to our Genetrix who sent us here at first. The fact that we are borne aloft by music, transported unto the very borders of infinity where we may gaze through the aperture of music into Eternity itself, is a sentiment constantly reiterated by Western poets and philosophers. Rūmī also finds the secret of music's delight to consist in contemplation of that musical pleasance where the ever-blossoming Garden of Love is in bloom:

> The music of *samā'* is like a window
> That lends access to your garden
> And on its sill to hear one note
> The lovers lay their ear and heart.
> That window is—alas—one grand veil,
> Although the veil's a sweet delight—
> Go, my noble friend and keep silent.[28]

Rūmī considers the entire mystery of music to stem from a faint recollection of certain celestial melodies and airs originally audited in

[27] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, IV, *ghazal* 1734, p. 65, trans. LL.

[28] Ibid., V, *ghazal* 2404, vv. 25392-93, trans. LL.

Paradise. Despite the fact that our faculties have since become darkened and dimmed by worldly preoccupations and the sensory attachments of the material realm, a memory of those heavenly tunes still exists in our Unconscious. In that primordial paradise, we had originally audited those celestial melodies that flowed through our souls like a clear and limpid stream. Now, in this terrestrial exile all we can hear is the sound of a dreggy trickle of water gurgling down a black mudhole. Still, because of the love we still have for that primordial water, even such rustic tunes can send us into transports, causing us to become drowned in delight. Albeit, the delight bestowed by music on the material plane pales in comparison with that of the heavenly "music of the spheres":

> The awesome din of drums, the bugle's hue and cry
> Appeared to him to be that cosmic trumpet's cry.
> From heaven's whirring spinning jenny we've received
> These tuneful strains and airs, philosophers thus believed.
> The circling gyres and the spheres' polyphony
> They maintained, gave men's voice and lutes this psalmody.
> Believers say those sounds came down from Paradise;
> Through Heaven's grace these shrill strains seem idyllic tunes.
> It was in Heaven we heard that dulcet measure
> For all of us were bits and parts of Adam there.
> Although the dust and grime of doubt has left its stains,
> A memory in us exists of those refrains,
> Though now we're besmeared with earthly griefs and care,
> Defiled, how should this bass and treble grant that cheer?
> If water's mixed with piss and dung and excrement
> It turns its nature to something tart and astringent,
> Yet something of the nature of water remains
> Therein, and though it be but piss, it kills the flames.
> That's why, for lovers, song and verse and music is
> Their food and drink, for there, their fancy finds focus,
> There's concentration of the imagination,
> One's inmost thoughts attain there invigoration;
> In fact, by flute and horn find configuration.[29]

In some extraordinary verses from the *Dīvān-i Shams*, Rūmī likens music to "*Spiritus dei* of each and every thing—their whole reality" that gives "shape to every reality of the cosmos," as if music were a kind of

[29] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, IV: 732-43, trans. LL.

abstract mathematics expressing the underlying realities of the universe through numbers and numerical relations:

> Lover, mistress, soul-mate,
> Your serenade, oh sonorous nay,
> a heart-warmth inbreathes;
> men's frostbitten speech you slay.
> Your reed-pipe's hollow, void of fears,
> So you relieve the heart of bonds and cares.
> A master-draughtsman though unschooled and plain,
> You sketch the likeness of each person's mistress.
> *Spiritus dei* of each and every thing,
> Their whole reality, you give shape to every reality
> Of the cosmos. Which gamut fits your scale?
> Lift up your head from the reed-pipe's belly:
> This melody you play is lusciously savory.[30]

For Rūmī, music is not simply an article of faith. It is religion and faith itself. Better than all the other fine arts, music attests to the transformation of inchoate plurality into unified wholeness. Because music's spiritual effect is wholistic, effecting the transmutation of multiplicity into unity, Rūmī boldly announces that his religion—that is, his Muslim profession of faith in God and divine Unity—amounts to naught else but "the science of music (*'ilm-i mūsīqī*)":

> Oh harp, I long to hear the tune of *Isfahan*.
> Oh flute, oh nay, play me your burning, siren song.
> Go set the frets on *Hijaz* and sing me a sweet chorale—
> I am the bird of Solomon and long to hear his whistle.
> Bear him a gift of notes that range from *'Iraq* to *'Ushshaq*:
> I wish to hear the happy strains of *Rast* and *Busalik*.
> This melody demands you begin with *Husayni*.
> To tunes like *Zirkhurd* and *Zir-buzurg* I love to listen.
> This scale *Rahavi* put me asleep—enough!
> Strike up the *Camel-bell Song* tune—that's what I love!
> This science of music is the faith that I profess;
> On this I pin my faith, as God is my witness.[31]

[30] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, VI, *ghazal* 2994, vv. 31825-28, trans. LL.

[31] Ibid., I, *ghazal* 457, vv. 4837-42, trans. LL.

Both in the *Mathnawī* or the *Dīvān-i Shams*, Rūmī's original poetic compositions are infused with musicality, melody, and rhythm. In the first place, he gives expression to his own thought which forms the intellectual substance and source of the internal melody of his poem. Secondly, he uses metaphors, allegories, parables, proverbs, and lovely tales to create harmony within the poem, thus adding fresh dimensions to his poetic symphony. Thirdly and lastly, when the intellectual and literary melody within the poem itself is recreated by means of the musical recital through the contemplative practice of listening (*samā'*) to his poem, an indescribable delight and pleasure is bequeathed the listener.

VI. Blind Imitation and Self-Realization

Another important movement of Rūmī's symphony concerns his polemic against the vice of blind imitation (*taqlīd*) as contrasted to his praise of the virtue of self-realization, known in Sufi terminology as "direct experiential verification" (*taḥqīq*). Since religious conformism has been the source of man's error and corruption over the course of history, initially he states that one should not be a conformist (*muqallid*) because there is a world of difference between someone bound down by the manacles of religious precedent and someone who has directly and experientially realized a spiritual practice from within himself (*muḥaqqiq*). He maintains that anyone able to free themselves from blind imitation and have a direct experience of the reality of love will become utterly overwhelmed by the divine might and majesty. He illustrates this soul-shattering experience by telling the parable of the peasant who went into his stable in the dark and, thinking it was his domesticated ox, actually stroked the back of a wild lion:

A peasant tied his ox up one dark night;
    A lion came and ate it with one bite!
He came to see his ox, but had to look
    In every corner and each tiny nook,
And thus he felt the lion's legs and back,
    Its side and rear, but it did not attack.
The lion thought, "If it was now more bright,
    His heart would melt, his stomach turn in fright.
For this he's stroking me courageously:
    He thinks that I'm his ox, since he can't see."[32]

[32] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, II, vv. 503-07, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book Two*, II, vv. 506-10 (corresponding to the Isti'lamī edition).

Following this anecdote, Rūmī makes the most direct statement in all his oeuvre about the scourge of blind imitation versus the benefits of direct spiritual realization. He tells the tale of the Sufi who visited a dervish hospice (*khānaqāh*) during his travels, where he wished to stay for the night. The Sufi took his donkey to the hospice's stable, tied it up at a stall there, laboriously feeding his weary beast of burden with just the right amount of fodder and water. Then he went to join the dervish congregation, intending to enjoy the Sufis' company and musical concert. What he didn't realize was that these particular Sufis had no means of entertaining him. Being totally destitute and poverty-stricken, the Sufis, without informing their guest, had stolen and sold the traveler's donkey and then bought enough victuals to give their starving congregation a huge feast, which was followed by an elaborate, noisy concert in honor of their new guest. As the musicians and dervishes grew warm singing their devotional hymns, the vocalist suddenly began to chant: "the ass has gone, the ass has gone" for the key choral song. The traveler surrendered himself to the spiritual ambience, happily chanting "the ass has gone" alongside the dervishes, blindly imitating their conviviality, joining in their jubilation little understanding the coda that the duplicitous dervishes had concealed in their chant: that "the ass has gone" was a secret threnody for his own forsaken mount!

The next morning when the wayfarer went to the steward of the Sufi congregation and demanded back his ass, he was told that the Sufis had stolen the beast and used it to buy victuals for the evening meal. "And this you yourself must have known since you were singing, 'the ass has gone' all along with such deep religious fervor in the assembly. Although I tried to come and tell you several times what had happened, your ecstasy and engagement with the concert was so intense that I assumed you to be a true mystic content to be robbed of his possessions":

> He said, "I came so many times, I swear
> To tell you about this sad affair,
> But you were chanting with them, 'The ass has gone!'
> With such great zeal, and then you went on and on!
> I went back, thinking: 'He knows what occurred;
> He's wise and still content though he has heard.'"
> "They chanted happily," the guest then said,
> "The joy of chanting soon filled up my head.
> I've been defeated through vile imitation—
> May it be cursed with a complete damnation!"[33]

[33] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, II, vv. 559-63, trans. J. Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book Two*, II, vv. 562-66.

VII. Sense and Syntax

Another important musical movement in Rūmī's symphony concerns the correspondence between abstract ideas and their concrete expression in words, that is to say, the relationship between sense and syntax, a relationship roughly parallel to that of harmony to music. It is usually emphasized that in all his poetry, whether the mystical epic verse of his *Mathnawī* or the lyrics of his *Dīvān*, Mawlānā was not a wordsmith consciously preoccupied with polishing and refining the letter of his verse. While he evidently did not take much care to rework his poems word by word, it is clear that he was concerned that every line possessed proper verbal symmetry and lexical congruity as good poetry requires, expressed a harmonious balance of sense with syntax, that each couplet was couched in the right phrases, using precisely *le mot juste* to illustrate the ideas under discussion. Sublime ideas which enter the mind are just like melodies that come into a composer's head, and like those melodies these ideas bring along with themselves their own distinct rhythms, beats, and meters. For this reason it was not necessary for Rūmī to consciously take time out to ponder which rhyme and which meter to use in his poems, for as the inspiration of the *Mathnawī* descended, it came already "in tune," "attuned" within the poet's mind with the sweet concord of song and music and meter, as he has in fact stated in those famous lines:

> I reflect and meditate on rhymes and meters.
> "Only on me you should contemplate," my mistress says.
> "My rhyme-struck friend, relax," she says: "with me
> Here we'll rhyme in the meter of felicity.
> What's words, that they should ever occupy your mind?
> What's words? They're just the bristly hedge of the vineyard."
> I'll go and sabotage all sounds and words and speech
> To spend devoid of these in loving you a single breath.[34]

In fact, for any artist who gains access to the fountainhead of poetic inspiration and creativity, the Muse herself automatically dictates the correct arrangement of the poem's rhyme and meter, and it is she who arranges the bouquet in which the rose of melody is set beside the sweet basil and green herbs of harmony. The following two couplets comprise some of the loveliest examples of the harmonious combination of ide-

[34] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I, vv. 1727-30, trans. LL.

ational meaning (*ma'nā*) with its verbal expression (*lafẓ*), of sense with syntax, in all of Persian poetry:

> In the fires of your hauteur and coquettish disdain
> Go consume, commit to the flames the wares of our being,
> For that subtle bequest's the lot of needy mendicants.[35]

* * *

> I'm like the fabulous gryphon whose supplication
> is just to soar above the whirligig of heaven;
> I'm like the Lord of Fate, Captain of Destiny,
> whose storm-troops charge and break the back of every army.[36]

VIII. The Eternal Feminine

One of the most important movements in Rūmī's symphony is composed in celebration of the topos of the Eternal Feminine.[37] During the historical period in which Rūmī flourished, women compared to men were confined to inferior social roles. An utterly absurd sexual apartheid prevailed that was maintained by the patriarchal establishment. Females were confined to their homes, kept in check and subject to a myriad of bigoted cultural mores and backward religious restrictions. Despite these unfavorable social conditions to which women were subject in mediæval Muslim Anatolia, Rūmī invariably glorifies the Eternal Feminine throughout the *Mathnawī*. He develops a conception of woman as a theophany which manages to break the mould of these primitive cultural mores. Throughout his poetry he celebrates the celestial degree of woman, praising her benevolent grace and all-encompassing beneficial influence on the lives of men. Rūmī views woman as a creature of hauteur, possessing the degree of the disdainful coquette. The degree of woman in Rūmī's view is properly that of coquettish disdain (*nāz*). She has all the hauteur of a heartthrob's ravishing loveliness (*maḥbūbiyāt*) and necessarily she attracts and allures man to herself by her flirtatious wiles and ways, so it is incumbent on her

[35] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, I, *ghazal* 479, v. 5084, trans. LL.

[36] Ibid., IV, *ghazal* 1633, v. 17105, trans. LL.

[37] See also R.J.W. Austin, "The Sophianic Feminine in the Work of Ibn 'Arabi and Rumi," in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 2: *The Legacy of Mediæval Persian Sufism*, pp. 233-45. – Ed.

lover, if he be sensitive and wise, to secure her satisfaction and peace of mind.

The woman whose fair face enslaved the man,
what happens when she starts to act the slave?
She whose magnificence will quake your heart—
how will you be when she breaks down before you?
When hearts and souls are bleeding for her glances,
how will it be when she's the one in need?
Her cruel tyranny has us entrapped—
how will we plead when she gets up to plead?
"To men alluring"[38] as God fashioned things.
how can they flee what God has made for them?
He made her that "he might take comfort in her,"[39]
so how can Adam now be cleaved from Eve?[40]

As both these verses and the revealed word of the Qur'ān attest, the figure of woman is invariably rendered beautiful in the eyes of men. For this reason no man has ever lived who remained immune to woman's charms and winsome ways. Rūmī thus writes:

A Hamze and Rostam in bravery—
His wife still keeps him bound in slavery,
Although his words could make the whole world sway,
"*Please redhead, speak to me!*" he would say.[41]

Whether one is a mighty champion like Rustam, a doughty warrior like the Prophet's uncle, Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, or the Prophet Muḥammad himself, whose revelation captivated and enthralled the entire

[38] An allusion to the following passage in the Qur'ān (III:14): "To men are made alluring and beautiful the joys that come from women and offspring, and stored-up heaps of gold and silver, and horses branded with their mark, and cattle and land. That is the comfort of the life of the world. But with God is the more excellent abode" (M. Pickthall trans., slightly modified).

[39] An allusion to the following passage in the Qur'ān (VII:189): "He it is who did create you from a single soul, and therefrom did make his mate that he might take comfort in her" (M. Pickthall trans., slightly modified).

[40] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I, vv. 2421-26, trans. Alan Williams, *Rumi, Spiritual Verses: The First Book of the Masnavi-ye Ma'navi* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), vv. 2430-37.

[41] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I, vv. 2427-38, trans. J. Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book One*, II, vv. 2438-39 (corresponding to the Isti'lamī edition).

world—but who yet, according to tradition, would continually ask his young wife 'Ā'ishah (a capricious coquettish redhead) to entertain him with her charming company and conversation—in the end Rūmī acknowledges that the man who is not in thrall to his wife or mistress simply does not exist.

Following the above lines in the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī strikes a lovely comparison in order to show the difference between the respective roles of men and women in society. The comparison he makes is universal in its relevance and suitable to every age, but the image is especially apt today as a lesson to women on how to preserve their desirability and love-worthiness.

> The water vanquishes the fire by shock,
> but fire will make it boil up in the pot.
> And when a cauldron comes between the two,
> it makes the water vanish in thin air.[42]
> Though outwardly above her you may tower,
> You want her, so inwardly she has the power.[43]

Here, Rūmī suggests we may liken man to water and woman to fire. Should nothing be placed in between them to serve as a curtain between the two sexes, the masculine water will certainly quench and extinguish the feminine fire without her fire heating up his water. If on the other hand, one totally segregates water from fire, the female fire will eventually peter out and end up as ashes without ever heating up the water. However, if one places fire and water side by side and juxtaposes a kettle between them, the water will not extinguish the fire while the fire will gradually heat up the water within the kettle and bring it to a boil. It is this ebullience that ultimately leads a man to seek a girl's hand in marriage, that drives him to set up a family, and that culminates in the warm congenial hospitality of their hearth and home, bestowing maximum blessings and felicity upon both man and woman.

If we put Rūmī's comparison into today's language, he is saying that man and woman have a psychological need to enjoy each other's company and become acquainted with each other's personality, characteristics, and virtues. Through continuous social contact they will better be

[42] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I, vv. 2429-31, trans. A. Williams, *Rumi, Spiritual Verses*, I, vv. 2440-42.

[43] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I, v. 2432, trans. J. Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book One*, I, v. 2443.

able to properly understand their relation to each other. Men and women must not be segregated, rather taught to enjoy each other's company and companionship in various cultural, academic, and other social settings. A mutual longing between the sexes to live with one another will thereby be established, causing man and woman to achieve harmony between themselves, so that with open eyes they may learn how to be each other's mates and live together lovingly with one another.

Following these verses, Rūmī continues with the following lines penned in interpretation of a saying of the Prophet—"Verily women prevail over the wise, whereas ignorant men domineer over them."

> The Prophet once said, "Women all control
> Intelligent men, those who have a soul,
> But stupid men rule women, for they're crude
> And hold a simple, bullish attitude."
> They lack all tenderness and can't be kind—
> Their animal soul still controls their mind:
> Tenderness is a human quality,
> While lust and rage show animality,
> A ray from God is the one you love,
> Creative, uncreated, from above.[44]

In essence, woman is not a created being, Rūmī informs us in the last verse; she is herself, on the contrary, a virtual creator. She is a theophany—a ray of the divine. That ray transforms her into a semi-divine beloved, even if in truth our sole beloved be the Lord. In this respect, Jāmī's words bear citation:

> All loveliness that anywhere is manifest is his.
> It's him who's disguised behind the world's heartthrobs;
> He's there clandestine, pulling on the strings behind the scenes;
> His fate's decree makes every flirting tease to flaunt her charms.
> From him comes *joie de vivre* and love that animates the heart,
> Which slakes the soul and satiates the spirit and gives delight.
> All hearts enthralled in love with some chic *beau ideal*,
> Know it or not, love him in that seductive *femme fatale*.[45]

[44] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I:2432-37, trans. J. Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book One*, vv. 2444-49.

[45] Jāmī, *Mathnawī-yi Yūsuf va Zulīkhā*, in *Mathnawī-yi Haft awrang*, ed. A'lākhān Afḍaḥzād, Ḥusayn Aḥmad Tarbiyat (Tehran: Nashr-i Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1378 A.Hsh./1999), vol. 2, p. 36, vv. 334-37, trans. LL.

IX. Predestination and Freewill

Rūmī's power and profundity as a philosophical thinker is most in evidence in that movement of his grand poetic symphony where he raises knotty theological dilemmas and discusses abstruse mystical topics, issues which have embellished many a quarto with rhetorical flourishes penned by longwinded scholastic theologians over the centuries preceding him. He usually manages to resolve these difficult theological and theosophical issues by penning a single verse maxim or two—if, that is, one has the ear to hear.

The relation between "Predestination and Freewill" is one of those key issues that preoccupied Muslim scholastic theologians and which they debated endlessly but never managed to resolve in a satisfactory manner, since they invariably disagreed with each other's arguments, demonstrations, and conclusions. Thus Rūmī quipped:

> Till man's last day of resurrection
> debate goes on and on between
> Doom-men who teach predestination
> and partisans of free volition.[46]

In Rūmī's view, the advocates of freewill and predestination each have a valid case to make. Both positions are relatively right. On the one hand, it is entirely correct to say that everything is God's will and all has already been predestined by Him to occur. On the other, the feeling of freewill which we possess is also entirely in order, for each person is in hock to his own deeds and must inevitably reap the wheat he sows. According to the determinist point of view, in the words of Ḥāfiẓ:

> You'll free yourself of grief and heartache
> If you'd but hear this fine point of debate:
> You only give gnarling sorrow strength to bite
> If you seek for sustenance not of Providence.[47]

[46] Trans. LL. The version of the verse cited in the author's original Persian text that I have translated here can be found in Jalāl al-Dīn Huma'ī, *Mawlawī-nāma: Mawlawī chi migūyad?* (Tehran: Nashr-i Humā, 1385 A.Hsh./ 2006), I, p. 92. In Nicholson's (V:3214) and Isti'lamī's editions (V:3216) of the *Mathnawī* the version of this verse is slightly different, being given as: *Ham-chinīn baḥth-ast tā ḥashr-i bashar/ dar miyān-i jabrī va ahl-i qadar.* – Ed.

[47] *Dīwān-i Khwāja Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfiẓ*, ed. Parvīz Nātil Khānlarī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khʷārazmī, 1359 A.Hsh./1980), *ghazal* 472:1, trans. LL.

This determinist point of view is also expressed throughout the Qur'ān, perhaps the most famous verses in this regard being:

> No affliction befalls in the earth
> or in yourselves, but it is in a
> Book, before We create it; that is
> easy for God;
> that you may not grieve for what
> escapes you, nor rejoice in what has
> come to you; God loves not any man
> proud and boastful.[48]

As this verse reveals, all events occur according to God's will since all events and circumstances He has brought into being. The following quatrain (51) from Edward Fitzgerald's translation of 'Umar Khayyām's *Rubā'iyāt* gives one of the most beautiful summaries of the doctrine of predestination in all of world literature:

> The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
> Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
> Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

The apprehension that everything has already been predetermined from the very beginning of time by God can also be reconciled with the law of cause and effect insofar as every event has a cause, and then that cause another cause and so forth, until at last (since it is impossible to have a series of causes continuing back *ad infinitum*) one reaches the ultimate "Cause of Causes." Therefore, the source-spring of all those secondary causes and the originator of all events must be a First Cause, which is the Cause of Causes. However, insofar as the ways of Providence and the will of God are unknown to us, this apprehension of predestination in practice doesn't really affect our life as individuals or alter our interaction with one another in society. Furthermore, within ourselves we all clearly sense the existence of our individual volition and freewill, and according to the same law of cause and effect we also apprehend, for example, that if we ever wish to attain such and such an aim, we must act in a certain manner which is appropriate to its realization. Therefore each person has the distinct feeling within himself that he is responsible for his own actions and that others are equally responsible for their deeds as well.

[48] *Koran*, trans. A.J. Arberry (Oxford: OUP, 1982), LVII:22.

In a satirical anecdote meant to mock a travesty of the high doctrine of predestination maintained by the philistine common man in order to justify his own knavery, Rūmī clarifies that the idea of predestination has no place in our daily lives. Whoever insists on emphasizing or giving prominence to the notion of God's compulsion in his secular affairs, he argues, should be subjected to punishment!

A man crept through an orchard by secret,
Climbed up a tree and tried to snatch some fruit.
The gardener came up and cried, "You dog!
Stop, you thief! Don't you have the fear of God?"
"Chill out," the bandit said, "I'm but God's slave:
It's God who gave these dates to us, you knave!
You're so totally petty, so common;
It's wrong to scold me like a simpleton—
Uncharitably mean towards the Wealthy One."

"Hey Joe!" The gardener said, "Go and get
That length of rope for me. This man has got
A point, but first what he should hear about,
To get a taste of this debate, is what
Is called the 'stick,' or, 'brigand's riposte.'"
The gardener's men then took him and lashed
Him foot and hand to that same tree. They thrashed
Him front and back, a shovel for their cudgel.
"Have you no fear of God? You're giving me hell!"
The thief protested, "Have some shame, have sympathy!
It's agony! Where's your humanity?"

The gardener said: "We're all but God's slaves.
This cudgel that we strike you with is God's
Own instrument. You're his bounden slave, us
The willing agents of His business.
The club is God's; its back and sides as well.
I'm but God's servant at His beck and call
Hitting you at His behest—that's God's will!"
The thief confessed, "My fatalism was all
Amiss and false. I now repent of all
I said: Freewill is right! *Freewill! Freewill*!"[49]

[49] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, V:3077-86, trans. LL.

All throughout the *Mathnawī* Rūmī makes frequent references to the advocates of both camps—freewill and predestination—the doctrines of each of which he carefully considers and deals with appropriately without favoring any one side over the other. His attitude towards this theological dilemma is best encapsulated by this adage ascribed to Abū Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), "Neither absolute determinism nor total freedom of the will exist, but rather something in between the two." This saying implies that one should dismiss the idea that God ever imposes any circumstance upon a person through the direct force of His will. Nothing of the sort ever happens at all. Likewise, one should also discard the notion of the existence of any absolute freewill—that is, the false idea that man is somehow quintessentially able to determine his own destiny regardless of what happens throughout the rest of existence. In actual fact, the truth of the situation is all the occurrences that take place in the world do so according to God's will through the channel of man's freewill. Under no circumstances does God's will ever impede man from apprizing or having the conscious apprehension that his will is free and acknowledging that he himself alone is responsible for his own actions.[50] Hence, Rūmī comments:

> The demonstration of God's compulsion
> Appears in our distress and imploration.
> It's human shame and awkwardness
> That proves the truth of our free choice
> For whence this shame if freewill's naught?
> And whence this ruing and embarrassment?[51]
>
> * * *
>
> Human discretion and freewill has a clear proof
> When you confess, "Tomorrow I'll go do that or this."[52]

The *Mathnawī* is full of many such theological discussions, as has been demonstrated with elaborate detail and erudition in Jalāl al-Dīn Huma'ī's two-volume work in Persian entitled: *Rūmī's Epistle: What does Rūmī Say?* (*Mawlawī-nāma: Mawlawī chi migūyad?*). Huma'ī's marvelous work features many lengthy discussions of a number of fasci-

[50] For further discussion see Huma'ī, *Mawlawī-nāma*, I, pp. 81-83; and *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, V:3022ff. –ED.

[51] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I:618-19, trans. LL.

[52] Ibid., V:3024, trans. LL.

nating theological and mystical topics including the world's eternity vs. temporality, continuous ideational renewal, substantial motion, the unity of the divine Essence, and the eternity of the spirit.

X. The Spirit

Regarding the eternity of the spirit, in particular, few poets can rival Rūmī in coining so many fresh and expressive metaphors, original allegories, and subtle images in order to enable the mind of man to apprehend the essence of the spirit and its immortality. According to Rūmī, in essence our being consists of an eternal, unborn, and uncreated spirit (*rūḥ*). The body, on the other hand, is but a child of—or rather a shadow cast down by—that spirit:

> There is a bird in flight whose shadow has been cast
> On earth, yet in the *mundus invisibilis* it
> Flitters. Our body with its coarse, crass flesh is but
> Its shadow—shadow of a shadow of the heart.
> How should this body, this base physicality
> Become its rank, be fit to know the heart's degree?
> A man's asleep between the sheets and tossing in
> His bedding, yet his spirit shines like heaven's sun.
> His spirit's truant, sandwiched 'twixt the lining's wainscot,
> His body's turning to and fro beneath the duvet.[53]

Speaking of the inspiration of the *Mathnawī*, he expresses the same idea as follows:

> The wine fermenting craves our fermentation,
> and heaven turning craves our understanding.
> The wine got drunk on us, not we on it;
> the body came from us, not we from it.
> We're like the bee, the body's like the hive,
> and like the hive each body cell's constructed.[54]

The eternal spirit, a wayfarer condemned to wander in exile throughout this world, has descended into this terrestrial realm for providential pur-

[53] Ibid., VI:3306-08, trans. LL.

[54] Ibid., I:1811-13, trans. Alan Williams, *Rumi: Spiritual Verses*, vv. 1821-23.

poses for a short spate of time. The reasons for her passage through and presence upon the earth remain as mysterious and hidden as the sight of the spirit itself appears to the eyes. This spirit is a lovely girl vouchsafed to the intellect—which itself is endowed with an immense grandeur and nobility—to guard and protect. The intellect, her guardian, is tremendously jealous to preserve the girl's honor and so strives to conceal her behind a multitude of veils. Amongst these veils are the body itself which becurtains our soul, and our conversation and words that cloak conceptions and ideas. Indeed, how many words are spoken just for their own sake, intended merely to enthrall a listener's ear and distract his eye from witnessing the spirit's beauty:

> The Intellect is jealous of the Spirit's beauty,
> That's why my poem overflows with allegory.
> Why should Higher Reason of her be jealous?
> The Spirit is already hidden quite enough—
> The Intellect's light is the veil of her face.
> From whom would you hide? Oh jealous one, your visage?
>
> "I hide that Spirit even from myself," Reason says,
> "That's why this fleshly jealousy seems so intense."
>
> Like nightingales lament before the rose's face;
> Distract her lovers lest they apprehend her fragrance.
> Abstract their ear with rhetoric, with songs and speech;
> Divert their minds from glancing at her countenance.[55]

XI. Death

The intellect, a spiritual subtlety, is the envy of the angels and the heavenly pleroma. Its residence here is but for a moment's breath and then it is gone, fled like a parrot from the cage of the body, flown back to the India of the spiritual world. Rūmī conceives of the physical frame of the body as being but a sepulcher, a tomb which every moment switches its location and moves from place to place. So it is incorrect to say we go down into the tomb upon death; on the contrary, when we die we finally gain freedom from the mausoleum of the body's physical frame. Refer-

[55] Ibid., ed. Nicholson, VI:688-90, 693, 700-01, trans. LL.

ring to the idea that the divinely inspired voice of the saints can bring the forgetful human soul back to life, Rūmī writes:

> From corpses souls ascend without a choice
> Up from the body's tomb due to this voice,
> Saying, "This voice has a distinctive tone,
> To grant life is the job of God alone."[56]

According to another interpretation of death given by Rūmī, death is an awakening from being asleep in the midnight of the physical world:

> Souls that are bound in bodies made of clay
> Feel ecstasy when they can fly away,
> They dance to songs of passionate, sacred love,
> Expanding like the full moon high above.[57]

In another famous verse of the *Mathnawī*, he remarks:

> Oh cannibal who've rent the pelts
> of scores of Josephs,
> Once from this leaden-legged sleep you wake
> you'll be a wolf.[58]

There are numerous other images and interpretations of death found in his work, in which, for instance, death is compared to the resurrection of life at springtime, the exit of Joseph of the Spirit from the well of nature, or in which the terror of death is transformed into the delight of spiritual ecstasy.

XII. Love

However, the ever-recurring refrain of Rūmī's symphony is love. Like one of the underground rivers of paradise this theme courses beneath all of Rūmī's fruit-bearing trees of verse. If Rūmī's garden is continually

[56] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I:1931-32, trans. J. Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book One*, vv. 1941-42.

[57] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I:1346-47; trans. J. Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book One*, vv. 1355-56.

[58] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, IV:3662, trans. LL.

flourishing and evergreen, it is because it is irrigated by that *aqua vita* which is *Eros*.

O God! O God!
Amor—encore! Amor—encore!
The love that we possess
Is dulcet, beatific, flawless.
Amor—encore! Amor—encore!
From love's *aqua vita* comes our dance,
Not from the flute and not from *nay* and *daf*.
Deo gratias! Deo gratias![59]

He even begins an entire *ghazal* with the following invocation of the Water of Life of love:

Let the water of life of *Eros*
cascade through our veins;
That wine of midnight that we once drank
translate it into dawntide wine.[60]

Rūmī views love as being the panacea of all pains:

Be joyful, love, our sweetest bliss is you,
Physician for all kinds of ailments too,
The cure for our conceit and stubborn pride
Like Plato here with Galen, side by side.
Through love the earthly form soars heavenward,
The mountain dances nimbly like a bird.[61]

Another of the qualities of love is that it is magical, acting as a love potion, so that anyone who imbibes the potion becomes beloved by everyone.

Regard each lover as beloved too
Since it depends on just your point of view.[62]

[59] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, I, *ghazal* 94, vv. 1044-45, trans. LL.

[60] Ibid., IV, *ghazal* 1821, v. 19109, trans. LL.

[61] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I, v. 23-25, trans. J. Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book One*, I, vv. 23-25.

[62] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, I, v. 1740, trans. J. Mojaddedi, *The Masnavi: Book One*, I, v. 1750.

Love is also alchemy, transforming the base metal of the human soul into gold, elevating man to the loftiest degrees of humanity. Likewise, love is the elixir of life which grants immortality to everyone who is a lover.

> Like true men set the base copper of your being aside:
> Set copper aside and enter the elixir of existence.[63]

Love has also been likened to the keys of a closed door and the balm that soothes the aching heart:

> *Amor* has got a ring of keys
> dangling behind her as she walks.
> All gates she opens with those keys
> and each and every door unlocks.[64]

In another *ghazal* he writes:

> I realized the origin of love
> Was in a desert I stumbled on:
> There lay unsullied limpidity
> Free from all taint and impurity.
> A thousand locks I saw there
> Their latches wide as the heavens
> Yet only a letter or two or three
> Served as teeth for their keys.[65]

What else can be said of love? Whether characterized by metaphors referring to constant joy, eternal life, perpetual inebriation, or images of beautiful women or men, or cupbearers of wine, all goodness, blessings, joys, and delights in this world or the Next are totally in hock to love. In sum, nothing of ultimate value—no virtuous accomplishment or work of art—can ever be achieved without love. All types of perfection that one would realize are conditional on love. Without love, neither religion, nor moral principles, nor faith, nor excellence, nor art, nor sincerity would

[63] This verse (*mis-i khʷud rā bih yik sū nih chūn mardān // gudhār az qalb u dar iksīr mīraw*) is absent from both the Furūzānfar and Subḥānī editions of the *Kulliyāt-i Shams* but I have seen it in some unpublished Indian manuscripts of the *Dīvān*. —Ed.

[64] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, V, *ghazal* 2336, v. 24728, trans. LL.

[65] Ibid., II, *ghazal* 583, v. 6176, trans. LL.

exist, for without love all of these are but insubstantial, meaningless forms and shadows without any substance:

> Love is the substance and *prima materia*
> Of each thing of beauty one may fancy
> Although the forms and figures of phenomena
> Disguise the spirit through divine jealousy.[66]

As a *finale* to Rūmī's symphony in verse, I can do no better than offer a few verses in praise of love from several passages in book five of the *Mathnawī*, verses which, whenever they are read, sung, recited, or simply recalled have always seemed to me as though the glorious retinue of the Sultan of Love were passing before my eyes in all his glory and majesty:

> Love is a sea and heaven's vault, its foam and froth,
> Insatiable as Zulaykhā in love for Joseph.
> Love's rippling billows rouse the firmament to move.
> The world would all freeze without love's sultriness.
> Why would the mineral in vegetable life
> Efface itself, or plants to spiritual life
> Give way? Why else would Spirit into *pneuma* descend
> To fan the natal wind that made a virgin fecund?
> Each thing would lie languid as ice, frigid, listless.
> How could they fledge their wings and fly in swarms like locusts?
> Each flake of foam is a lover of Infinity
> That hastens upwards after honor, rank, and glory.[67]

* * *

> In love whatever's heard or spoken has no place:
> The ocean depths of love are fathomless.
> No one can count the multiple drops of the sea.
> The seven seas evaporate before love's sea.
> It's love that makes the ocean boil like a kettle
> And love that grinds a mountain into flint and gravel.
> Love cleaves the vault of heaven with a myriad clefts:
> What quakes the earth is but love's extravagance.
> Muḥammad with true love in purity was weld:

[66] Ibid., II, *ghazal* 1012, v. 10680, trans. LL.

[67] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, V, vv. 3853-58, trans. LL.

"But for your love," said God, "I'd not have made the world."
Because in love's affairs, Muḥammad was the best
And ultimate, he is elect amongst the prophets.[68]

—*Translated by Leonard Lewisohn*

[68] Ibid., V, vv. 2731-32, 2735-38, trans. LL.

Principles of the Philosophy of Ecstasy in Rūmī's Poetry[1]

LEONARD LEWISOHN

Blest pair of sirens, pledges of heaven's joy,
Sphere-borne harmonious sisters. Voice, and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce,
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbed song of pure concent . . .
—Milton ("At a Solemn Music")

Rūmī's Ecstatic Bacchanalia

To the encomia with which Rūmī's brows are belaureled, another accolade might be added—that he is supreme among all Persian poets both in quantity of production and quality of composition for lyrics of ecstasy, intoxication, and bacchanalian joy. Perhaps this is why the lyrical poetry of his *Dīvān-i Shams* has been described by a famous Iranian critic as representing "the apogee of bacchanalian mysticism in the Persian language."[2] Both Rūmī's *Mathnawī* and the *Dīvān-i Shams* are full of allusions to ecstasy, selfless transports, stunned silences, and drunken raptures. From the very beginnings of literary criticism in Iran in the mid-nineteenth century, critics have highlighted the point that Rūmī's poetry belongs to a venerable and ancient tradition of mystical bacchanalian (*khamriyya*) poetry in Islam,[3] of which love, love's intoxication,

[1] I am deeply indebted to Terry Graham for his meticulous copy-editing and to Professors Alan Williams and Franklin Lewis for their careful reading and helpful comments on a previous version of this essay.

[2] Bahā' al-Dīn Khurramshāhī, *Insānam ārizū'st: bar-guzīda u sharḥ-i ghazaliyāt-i Mawlānā* [*Anthology and commentary on the ghazals of Rūmī*] (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Nigāh, 1386 AHsh./2007), p. 10. Rūmī's *khamriyya* are completely Sufic in nature. Of course, there have been other Persian poets who wrote both profane and mystical *khamriyya* verse, foremost of whom is Ḥakīm Nizārī Quhistānī (d. 721/1321). See my "Sufism and Ismā'īlī Doctrine in the Persian Poetry of Nizārī Quhistānī (645-721/1247-1321)," in *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*, XLI (2003), pp. 229-51.

[3] See J.E. Benecheikh, "Khamriyya," *EI*^{2}, IV, pp. 998-1008 for an erudite overview of its

and ecstasy are the leitmotifs. Among the numerous testimonies of this association of Rūmī's poetry with drunkenness and ecstasy, the following comment by the eminent Qājār *homme de lettres* and diplomat Riḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat (d. 1288/1871) merits citation:

> I have read many books, heard much poetry, have left to posterity a large quantity of works both in prose and verse. I have also published several anthologies of works of distinguished writers and eloquent poets of Persia. However, I have never seen any lyric poetry in Persian capable of stimulating so much ecstasy (*wajd-angīz*) or so full of love (*'ishq-āmīz*) like that of Mawlānā.[4]

Hidāyat's reference to ecstasy here is of particular importance because the main practical purpose that Rūmī's poems served was to stimulate *wajd*, to arouse ecstasy, which is why they are today still used as part of the traditional repertoire of *samā'* by the Sufis who hearken to his verse with the ear of the heart. His poetry is based on a meta-rational "philosophy of ecstasy," an aesthetics of spiritual savor (*dhawq*) that is apprehended by the spiritual heart as the seat of gnosis.[5] All the poetic

background in Arabic literature. For mystical bacchanalia in Arabic poetry from Rābi'a in the eighth to Amīr 'Abd al-Qādir in the nineteenth century, see idem., "v. Mystical intoxication or substituted speech," p. 1006. As Benecheikh shows, the Sufi mystics from Rābi'a in the eighth century onwards adopted the highly anti-clerical and secular antinomian lexicon of Arabic *khamriyya* poetry for spiritual purposes. The vocabulary of libertinism which featured prominently in the poetry of Abū Nuwās (d. circa 814), the most skilled (and decadent) of the masters of the *khamriyya* genre, was revived and reinterpreted by the Sufi mystics, who "took possession of a well-established framework and activated it by substituting for hedonistic motivations the decisive quest for happiness in God. From there, a whole symbolism becomes established. Wine becomes a divine emanation which spreads its rays from one form to another, a symbol of the supreme love which manifests itself in creation. Drunkenness is forgetfulness of all that is not He" (*ibid.*, p. 2006). For a comprehensive review of *khamriyya* poetic symbolism in Persian Sufism and poetry, see Javad Nurbakhsh, *Sufi Symbolism*, Vol. 1: *The Esoteric Symbolism of the Parts of the Beloved's Body*, translated by Leonard Lewisohn and Terry Graham (London: KNP, 1984), especially part 2 on "Sufi Symbolism of Wine, Music, Mystical Audition (*Samā'*), and Convivial Gatherings" (pp. 123-214).

[4] Rūmī, *Dīwān-i kabīr: Kulliyāt-i Shams-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥusayn Balkhī-yi Rūmī ma'rūf bi Mawlawī*, ed. Tawfīq Subḥānī from the Konya Manuscript (Tehran: Anjumān-i āthār u mafākhir-i farhangī, 1386 A.Hsh./2007), introduction, p. viii.

[5] See *Kulliyāt-i Shams yā Dīwān-i kabīr az guftār-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad mashhūr bi Mawlawī, ba tashīḥāt wa ḥawwashī*, ed. Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar (Tehran: Sipihr, 1363 A.Hsh./1984), IV, *ghazal* 1868, which is almost entirely devoted to the metaphysics of *dhawq*. For an extended discussion of the metapsychology of *dhawq* and its importance in Persian Sufi poetry, see my *Beyond Faith and Infidelity: The Sufi Poetry and*

metaphors which are used to describe the "savor" of this transcendental understanding are bacchanalian, that is to say, couched in antinomian Sufi tavern slang that is both "public" and "hermetic,"[6] using a kind of drunkards' lexicon whose key terms are wine, wine-cups, cupbearers, intoxication, rapture and ecstasy—each of these terms having technical significance in Sufism. Rūmī was well-aware that the terms of this antinomian lexicon in the classical Sufi tradition had profane as well as sacred connotations, invariably handling the ambiguity between the two with impeccable panache, as the following verses attest:

> Today we've got songs and an amphora
> full of wine and the music of *samā'*;
> A Saki stone-drunk bears us the wine
> among this crowd of wayward libertines.
> They're "far-out" libertines, in fact, they've passed
> beyond existence—not decadent, demented
> Dope-fiend types, high on hemp or hash:
> the blacked-out addicts of the lowlife.[7]

In this *ghazal*, as Ḥusayn Ilāhī Ghomshei insightfully observes, Rūmī refers to "spiritually advanced mystics who have 'passed beyond existence' into a realm where the limitations of the illusory Selfhood, with its 'me' and 'thee,' are abolished."[8]

Just like other Persian and Arabic poets who wrote bacchanalian lyrics, Rūmī makes full use of the ambivalence of imagery and meaning

Teachings of Mahmud Shabistari (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1995), chap. 6.

[6] See Alessandro Bausani, *Religion in Iran: From Zoroaster to Baha'ullah*, trans. J.M. Marchesi (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2000), p. 256. See also my "Sufi Symbolism and the Persian Hermeneutic Tradition: Reconstructing the Pagoda of Attar's Esoteric Poetics," in L. Lewisohn & C. Shackle (eds.), *The Art of Spiritual Flight: Farid al-Din 'Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition* (London: I.B. Tauris & the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2006), pp. 265-66.

[7] Rūmī, *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, ed. Furūzānfar, vol. 6, pp. 15-16, *ghazal* 2637, vv. 27975-78. *Imrūz samā'ast u sharāb-ast u ṣurāḥī; yik Sāqī-yi bad-mast, yikī jam'-i mubāḥī. / Zān jins-i mubāḥī kay az ān sū-yi wujūd-ast; nay ibāḥatī-yi gīj, hashīsh muzhājī. / [Rūḥī'st mubāḥī kay az ān rūḥ chishīda-ast. / Kū rūḥ-i qadīmī u kujā rūḥ-i riyāḥī. / Dar pīsh-i chinīn fitna va dar dast-i chinīn may: Yā Rabb! chih shavad jān-i musalmān-i ṣalāḥī.*

[8] See his "The Principles of the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry," in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 94.

found in the *khamriyya* genre.[9] God's theophany is thus symbolized by a sparkling wine that intoxicates the contemplative's heart, which is symbolized by the wine-cup, for in the goblet of the heart, the mystic imbibes the rapture of meditation on the divine attributes (beauty, knowledge, omniscience), which leads to ecstatic transports (*wajd*). The symbolism of the mystical philosophy of ecstasy underpinning this bacchanalian lexicon was initially defined in classical Persian or Arabic dictionaries of Sufi symbols and terminology.[10] However, with respect to Rūmī's poetry in particular, the real implications of this "philosophy of ecstasy" have yet to be explored. In this essay, a preliminary investigation of the topic is offered.

The Ontology of Ecstasy in Classical Persian Sufism

The Etymology of the Ecstasy of Existence

Although as a term of literary analysis, ecstasy (*wajd*) belongs to the genre of the bacchanalian lyric, in the lexicon of Sufism it is featured as one of the key technical terms pertaining to the "science of mystical states" (*'ilm al-aḥwāl*). While *wajd*'s literal meaning is "ecstasy" or "rapture," the term being derived from the Arabic tri-literal root *wajada*, in different contexts denoting: "to find," "obtain," "experience," "suffer" (in the sense of passion), to be "in ecstasy," or "to be existent." From the tri-literal root are derived a series of participles, nouns, and adjectives, whence stem all the multiple levels of meaning given to *wajd* in Islamic metaphysics, musical theory, and mysticism. The more important derivatives of the root *W-J-D* are: i. *wajd*: (a) finding, (b) ardor, ecstasy; ii. *wijdān* (the verbal noun, emphasizing the active aspect of *wajd*): (a) "the find," (b) feeling, sentiment, ecstasy; iii. *wājid* (the active participle): (a) "the finder," (b) an

[9] Khurramshāhī, *Insānam ārizū'st*, p. 9.

[10] In English the most comprehensive treatment is Javad Nurbakhsh's *Sufi Symbolism* cited in footnote 3 above, published in 16 vols.: New York: KNP, 1984-2004. See also 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, *A Glossary of Sufi Technical Terms*, translated by Nabil Safwat (London: Octagon Press, 1991); many such dictionaries of Sufi terms have been published in Persian. Some of the best include: Ja'far Sajjādī, *Farhang-i lughāt wa iṣṭilāḥāt wa ta'bīrāt-i 'irfānī* (Tehran: Kitāb-khāna-yi Ṭahūrī, 1362 A.Hsh./1983; 3rd ed.); Maryam Zībā'ī-nizhād, *Farhang-i iṣṭilāḥāt-i ash'ārī-yi andīsha-yi Ḥāfiẓ* (Shīrāz: Nashr-i Rāhgushā, 1388 A.Hsh./2009); Sayyid Ṣādiq Gawharīn, *Sharḥ-i iṣṭilāḥāt-i taṣawwuf* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zawwār, 1388 A.Hsh./2009), 10 vols. in 5; Suhaylā Musavī Sīrjānī, *Farhang-nāma-yi taṭbīqī-yi ta'rīfhā va iṣṭilāḥāt-i 'irfānī-yi* Kashf al-maḥjūb *va* Mirṣād al-'ibād (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zawwār, 1381 A.Hsh./2002).

ecstatic; iv. *wujūd* (the abstract noun): (a) "findingness," (b) existence, (c) "realized ecstasy"; v. *mawjūd* (the passive participle): (a) the "Found One," (b) the "Existent One" (a name of God); vi. *tawājud* (a gerund), meaning "imitative ecstasy" or "affecting ecstasy." Without understanding the subtle interplay between the various connotations of these grammatically related terms, the rich meaning of *wajd* remains elusive.[11]

Noting the difficulties of conveying all of the morphological connotations of *wajd* implicitly understood by a native Arabic speaker through translation into the target language, Michael Sells points out that "there is a difference in metaphor between the [Greco-] Latinate term ecstasy (*ek stasis*) as 'standing outside oneself' or 'rapture' (from *raptus*), a 'being taken' or 'seized up' out of oneself, and the Arabic term *wajd*. *Wajd* combines the meaning of 'intense feeling' with 'finding'. . . . In addition to intense experience and finding, the lexical field of *wajd* also includes 'existence' (*wujūd*). . . . To exist is not simply to have being or phenomenal reality. On the contrary, . . . many saw existence as achieved only insofar as one's ego-self, one's normal identity and being, is annihilated. Existence occurs in the ecstasy and in the discovery that occurs through 'passing away.' The lexical field of w/j/d—ecstasy, finding, existence—corresponds as closely as any Sufi term to what is currently called mystical experience, though in its own distinctive conceptual configuration."[12] The colloquial English expression of *finding* (an experience) *to be* true conveys a similar, though not quite so profound, semantic subtlety.

Given the sophistication of Sufi theories of ecstasy over the centuries of its doctrinal elaboration as a technical term with all its complex etymological connotations and metaphysical ramifications, it will be useful to give a survey of the concept of *wajd* in Islamic mysticism of the early

[11] For further study of *wajd*'s etymology, see also Farid Jabre, *Essai sur le lexique de Ghazali: Contribution à l'étude de la terminologie de Ghazali dans ses principaux ouvrages à l'exception du* Tahāfut (Beirut, 1970), p. 270, and Leonard Lewisohn "Wad̲j̲d," *EI*^{2}, vol. XI, p. 23. Some recent psychological studies of the phenomenon of ecstasy have denigrated these metaphysical dimensions of *wajd* as merely a poetic fancy, and seen the experience itself as a species of pathological subjective hallucination, reducing these Sufi definitions of *wajd* (held to be related to existence, *wujūd*) as "ingenious, but . . . ultimately inaccurate, post hoc etymologies" (Kenneth Avery, *A Psychology of Early Sufi Samā'* [London: Routledge, 2004], p. 66). A similar condescending attitude towards the experience of *samā'* appears in Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*, trans. B. Biebuyck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 301.

[12] *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), p. 111.

classical period before entering into an examination of Rūmī's ecstatic poetics.

Doctrines of Ecstasy in the Baghdad School of Sufism

The early development of *wajd* as a technical term in Sufism was bound up with scholastic discussions on moral theory which flourished in the Sufi School of Baghdad. Ibn 'Aṭā's (d. 309/921) celebrated dispute with Abū'l-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910, known as the "Leader of the Sufi Company"), on whether *wajd* is characterized by the presence of joy or grief in the mystic is perhaps the most famous debate in this regard. Whereas Junayd declared that ecstasy means "dissociation, severance (*inqatā'*) from one's personal qualities while one's essence is graced with joy," Ibn 'Aṭā' only agreed partially with this definition, significantly replacing the word joy with grief.[13]

Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz (d. 277/890 or 286/899), another important Sufi in the School of Baghdad, devoted his *Kitāb al-ṣifāt* to analyzing the experience of proximity to God (*qurb*), describing the various stations traversed by the mystics to attain this degree. According to Kharrāz's schema, *wajd* or ecstasy is the first station experienced by those who have realized proximity to God. Describing the "signs of the ecstatics" he states:

> It is a kind of concentration of the attention with intense self-observation (*murāqaba*) accompanied by quietude of one's bodily limbs in immobility. Therein one searches for God without experiencing much fluctuation of mental imagery during contemplation (*khaṭarāt al-mushāhada*), neither allowing oneself to be moved by the initial flashes of intuitional consciousness. It is a

[13] *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn: A Dictionary of the Technical Terms Used in the Sciences of the Musalmans*, eds. Muḥammad Wajīh, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq, Ghulām Qādir & Nassau Lees (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1862), II, p. 1454; Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. H. Mason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), I, p. 92. Trying to reconcile the two opposing views, Tahānawī reasoned that while it "seems obvious that *wajd* may be defined as the cutting off of personal qualities—insofar as it involves a definite dissociation from human characteristics—from Junayd's standpoint, however, *grief* may effect the persistence of some *human* characteristics because it is a distillation of the remnants of the mystic's *personal* being. Hence he viewed 'the essence' as still attached to *joy* when describing this dissociation. . . . Ibn 'Aṭā', on the other hand, maintained that, because joy is essentially a characteristic of the sensual soul (*nafs*), being always bound up with sensuality, when describing dissociation, he thus maintained that the essence is still bound to *grief*" (*Kashshāf*, p. 1454).

> flight into solitude and isolation as one is filled with the viands of His pleasurable delights, resting in Him after undergoing the disturbance of the multiplicity of ways and means in seeking to practice emulation [of the Prophet]; and, in the end, it is finding intimacy in Him through compliance with His word when "he will relieve them of their burden" (Koran VII:157) and the loads they bear.[14]

Referring to this passage, Paul Nwyia notes that Kharrāz's understanding of *wajd* "is not so much an 'ecstasy,' as one normally translates the term, but actually an 'in-stasy,' because *wajd* is, first of all, a communion with oneself rather than an exit from oneself, a sort of meditation in order *to find* (*wajada*) the word of God within and so be delighted. *Wajada* is thus effectually 'to find,' and what one primarily finds on approaching God is the quietude and silence of 'all the senses' with total attention on God."[15] In the following verses from a *ghazal* by Rūmī, one finds the following poetic description of this sort of "in-stasy" experienced through music, that is, in the Sufi concert (*samā'*):

> Ecstatics! Hey! Ecstatics!—Go entreat the players play,
> Return to pleasure—pursue the shrieking of the *nay*.
> Sit in the cabaret of what's eternal where the soul's ear
> Can hear the Sufi concert. Discard all words, texts, and scrolls,
> Then fill your head with wine that lasts forever like a goblet;
> Roll up panoply of reason's pedantry and wit;
> Then go release yourselves, oh lovers, from all this stuff of self—
> Immerse yourselves in contemplation of that Beauty's life.[16]

The notion of *wajd* as an "in-stasy" rather than ecstasy is also found in definitions of *wajd* given by other leading members of the School of Baghdad: "Ecstasy/finding is the manifestation of the Existent One or 'the Found' (*mawjūd*)"—said Abū Bakr Shiblī (d. 334/945); and "Ecstasy/finding is the losing of personal being in the Divinely Found/Existent One"—stated Abū'l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907).[17]

[14] Cited by Paul Nwyia, *Exègése Coranique et Langage Mystique* (Beirut: Dar El-Machreq, 1970), p. 259.

[15] Nwyia, *Exègése Coranique*, p. 254.

[16] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, vol. 2, *ghazal* 747:7842, 7848-50, cited by Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 560.

[17] *Kashshāf*, p. 1454.

Commenting on Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj's (d. 304/922) teaching on Sufi mystical states, Louis Massignon observed: "Behind every ecstasy, as well as every action, he means to see only the One to Whom he is bound, Who enrapts, *man fi'l-wajdi Mawjūd*; God, Who, from ecstasy to ecstasy, continues to draw close to Him."[18] And as if to sum up all such debates, Tahānawī (d. 1745), the great lexicographer of gnostic terminology, concludes: "Whoever contemplates the Existent One during his finding/ecstasy is effaced from his finding/ecstasy in the findingness/existence of the Found/Existent One so that his finding/ecstasy is transformed into that."[19]

The doctrine of ecstasy in the Baghdad School of Sufism developed out of speculations concerning the spiritual psychology of annihilation (*fanā'*), that is, the mystic's attempt to obliterate his temporal self in the divine Ipseity.[20] For this reason, the same ontological connotations of *wajd* receive frequent mention in Junayd's enigmatic meditations on annihilation. In his doctrine of annihilation of the selfhood (*fanā'*) in the divine,[21] Junayd explains how *wajd* and *wujūd* belong to the final degree of three stages of annihilation. The first stage involves passing away from egocentric qualities and habits; the second, from all sense of personal pleasure in obedience to God; but "the third annihilation (*al-fanā' al-thālath*) is from beholding any reality in your ecstasies (*mawājīdika*) before the *mysterium tremendum* of witnessing God's consciousness of you. Here, in the midst of abiding in God you are annihilated, finding real existence (*mawjūd*) in your annihilation—through the Existence of the [divine] Other. Thus, your name is blotted out and only your barest trace remains."[22]

In one of his treatises "On Annihilation" (*Kitāb al-fanā'*), Junayd pairs God-given "existence" (*wujūd*, derived from *wajd*) with divine love, praising God Who "severs the attachments of those who practice mystical detachment . . . while he grants them real existence (*awjadahum*) and favors them with his love."[23] Throughout this treatise, the Sufi's very "existence" is understood to be the fruit of a kind of rapture. Since his

[18] *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, III, p. 26.

[19] *Kashshāf*, p. 1454.

[20] See Andrew Wilcox, "The Dual Mystical Concepts of *Fanā'* and *Baqā'* in Early Sufism," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 38/1 (2011), pp. 95-118.

[21] See F. Rahman, "Baḳā' wa-Fanā'," EI², I, p. 951. For further discussion see Wilcox, "The Dual Mystical Concepts," pp. 95-118.

[22] A.H. Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd* (London: Luzac & Co., 1976), pp. 54-55 (the translation from the Arabic text is mine).

[23] Ibid., p. 31 (the translation from the Arabic text is mine).

cognition grants him both real existence and ecstasy, ontology becomes apprehended through ecstatic mystical contemplation. As Sells aptly points out when analyzing the subtle interplay of the three meanings of *wajd* and *wujūd* ("finding," "ecstasy," and "existence") in this treatise, "Junayd speaks of the real existence as a transitive force, of the real as 'ex-isting them,' or 'founding them,' that is, infusing them with the genuine existence of the one reality."[24]

In a number of remarkable writings penned in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the mystics of the Khurāsān School of Sufism, particularly Abū Naṣr Sarrāj of Ṭūs (d. 378/988) and 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān Sulamī of Nīshāpūr (d. 412/1021), continued to deepen and sharpen these meditations on Sufi mystical psychology. Abū'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1074) in part three of his *al-Risālat al-Qushayriyya*[25] presented a synoptic treatment of Sufi concepts and terms, summing up the opinions of his predecessors on *wajd*, *tawājud*, and *wujūd*. Qushayrī noted that the highest level of ecstasy is *wujūd*, that rapture of existence itself which is simultaneously the realization of ecstasy's ontological origin, for "*wujūd* occurs when one transcends *wajd*, for the mystic understands the Rapture-of-God's-Being (*wujūd al-ḥaqq*) only after his mortal being (*basharīyya*) passes away."[26] This doctrine of ecstasy as an *ekstasis* from self and annihilation in God's attributes later became the subject of the following famous lines in Rūmī's *Mathnawī* on the meaning of *fanā'*.

> A preacher on a pulpit said: "The dervish is
> Naught; he does not exist. But if indeed he is,
> In fact he's not. His essence still subsists in one
> Way yet his character has disappeared in Him—
> In God's qualities. Just like a candle's ray
> Before the solar orb of day, he's passed away.
> He is and yet he's not. In sum, the flame's essence
> Yet still exists, for set cotton on it, it ignites,
> And yet it's naught; it gives no light to anyone:
> Its light has fled: the flame has perished in the sun.[27]

[24] Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 257.

[25] Qushayrī, *al-Risālat al-Qushayriyya*, ed. Zarīq/Balṭajī (Beirut Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1990).

[26] Cited by Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 113 (translation mine).

[27] Rumi, *Mathnawī-yi ma'nawī*, ed. R. A. Nicholson (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1357 A.Hsh./ 1976), III:3669-73.

This same conception of ecstasy as the annihilation of self-existence in God's being continued to be especially emphasized in later centuries by Sufis of the Akbarian school.[28]

The Ontology of Ecstasy and Psychology of Rapture in Sufi Music

As the above discussion has revealed, the highest state of ecstasy was referred to as *wujūd* or "existence" itself—the attainment of *wujūd*; "realized ecstasy" (as the abstract noun) thus became viewed as the supreme realization of existence as well. What is involved here may be likened to "finding the ecstasy (*wajd*) of being (*wujūd*)" while "listening to music" (*samā'*), that is, the application of the Sufi doctrine of ecstasy to the audition to music and song. This affiliation was succinctly expressed by Abū'l-Ḥusayn al-Darrāj (d. 320/932) in his assertion that "Ecstasy (*wajd*) signifies that which is found (*yūjadu*) through *samā'*."[29]

This understanding of *wajd* as a spiritual state of being inspired by the audition to music—*samā'* as the "food of love" so to speak—was based on a complicated mystical psychology of rapture and an ontology of ecstasy, the subtle interrelationship between auditory sensation and spiritual experience. That is to say, the experience of rapture and ecstasy is also intimately connected with the mystical psychology and contemplative disciplines of the Sufis in general and to the practice of musical

[28] The many connotations and etymological derivations of *wajd* discussed above were thus given a lengthy exposition in the famous Persian commentary on the *Tā'iyya* of the great Arab mystical poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 633/1235) by the Akbarian mystic Sa'īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d. 699/1299-1300), who informs us that "*Wajd* in the technical terminology of the Sufis denotes the seeker's finding (*yāft*) of this [sort of] 'attributed existence' (*wujūd-i muḍāf*) [which the poet described] on the [human] plane of his own absoluteness (*iṭlāq-i khwudish*) by means of the annihilation and obliteration of his many personal qualities and his determined, distinguishing characteristics (*fanā' va maḥw-i kithrat awṣāf wa aḥkām taqayyīdī wa imtiyāzī*). Thus, the seeker's 'finding' (*yāft*) was of his condition of detachment (*nisbat-i mujarrad*) and his eschewal of the fetters which shackled him to the control of those many levels (*qayd-i ḥukm-i kithrat-i marātib*) [of existence] which, until that moment, had dominated his whole being. But when this 'finding' becomes his own possession, they [the Sufis] label it 'findingness'/existence/'realized ecstasy' (*wujūd*)" (Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī: Sharḥ-i Tā'iyya Ibn Fāriḍ*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī [Tehran: Intishārāt-i falsafa va 'irfān-i islāmī-yi Dānishgāh-i Firdawsī, 1398 A.H./1978], pp. 364-65).

[29] Cited by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā 'ulūm al-dīn* (Damascus: n.p. and n.d.), II:257; D.B. Macdonald, "Emotional Religion in Islam," *JRAS*, 1901-1902, part 2, p. 719 (a translation of Ghazālī's book on *samā'* from the *Iḥyā'*). For a more elaborate discussion of this theme, see my "The Sacred Music of Islam: *Samā'* in the Persian Sufi Tradition," in *The British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, VI, (1997), pp. 22-25.

audition (*samā'*) in particular. According to the celebrated Sufi theologian who was the greatest theoretician of the practice of *samā'*,[30] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) definition: "Singing produces a state in the heart which is called *wajd*. In its turn, *wajd* causes the bodily limbs to move, whether the movement is non-rhythmic and the emotion be disorderly, or a rhythmic movement, in which case it is called clapping and dance."[31]

The basic psychological state of *wajd* during *samā'* is that of a heightened ecstatic egoless consciousness, known as "selflessness" (*bī-khʷudī*) in the lexicon of Persian Sufism.[32] The concept of selflessness is all-pervasive in Rūmī's poetry.[33] In the following verse taken from the signature line of a *ghazal*, Rūmī describes how his heart composed love-lyrics (*ghazal*) when he was intoxicated and selflessly drunk on divine wine:

> Before the start of time the selfless heart
> Was drunk on wine and wrote these verses out.
> The more the fumes of wine choke up my breath
> Each verse rhymes out more sweetly than the last.[34]

Here, for Rūmī, "the process of poetic creation is explicitly described as inseparable from moments of ecstasy."[35] For Rūmī as for Nūrī, the

[30] As Najīb Māyil Haravī in his superb collection of Persian Sufi treatises on *samā'*: *Andar ghazal-i khʷīsh nahān khʷāham gashtan* (*Samā'-nāmahā-yi fārsī*) (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, n.d.), p. 24, underscores.

[31] Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Cairo: Ḥalabī, 1346-52), II, p. 237. These same thoughts are elaborated in great detail by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, a contemporary of Ghazālī, in the exordium of his treatise *Bawāriq al-ilmā'*, ed./trans. James Robson [erroneously attributed by Robson to Majd al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī], *Tracts on Listening to Music* (London: RAS, Oriental Translation Fund, vol. 34 NS, 1938), Arabic text, pp. 121-2. He writes (translation mine): "The audition of this group (*al-ṭā'ifa*) [i.e. the Sufis] consists in mystical deliberation over (*mulāḥaẓat*) the hidden mysteries [concealed] within the highly refined poetry (*al-ash'ār al-raqīqa*) which are sung by the cantor (*qawwāl*) when touched by ecstasy (*wajd*) realized by the assiduous heart of the gnostic and the perfect disciple."

[32] For an extended discussion, see my "The Sacred Music of Islam," p. 22f.

[33] On Rūmī's concept of *bī-khʷudī*, see 'Abd al-Karīm Surūsh, "*Ān nafasī kih bā khʷudī* . . . *Ān nafasī kih bī- khʷudī*," *Iran Nameh* (Special Issue on Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī), nos. 1 & 2 (1388 A.Hsh./2009), pp. 187-99.

[34] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, ed. Furūzānfar, vol. 2, *ghazal* 538, v. 5735. *Dil bī-khʷud az bāda-yi azal mīguft khūsh khūsh īn ghazal / Gar may furū gīradash īn dam az īn khūshtar zanad* (meter: *rajaz-i musammam-i sālim*).

[35] Fatemeh Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric: The Case of Jalal al-Din Rumi* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), p. 27.

experience of *wajd* is an *ekstasis*, an exit from self and entrance into egoless consciousness,[36] such that the mystic claps his hands, and when he is liberated from the imperfections of selfhood, he dances.[37] Dance (*raqṣ*)—which in Sufism implies realization of the highest level of ecstasy—means to break and smash the self.[38] *Wajd* is the finding (*wajada*) of an existence transcending the consciousness of the finite ego—the very existence which for Sufis is Absolute Being Itself.

Ghazālī's philosophical analysis of the nature and place of *wajd* among the mystico-psychological states experienced by the Sufis during their concerts of musical audition (*samā'*) played a central part in subsequent debates on the legality of music and the place of ecstasy in the contemplative disciplines in Islam. An entire book of Ghazālī's monumental encyclopedia, devoted to the defense of *samā'*, was in fact entitled *Kitāb ādāb al-samā'y wa'l-wajd*, "The Book of the Proper Practice of Audition and Ecstasy"—thus indicating the important role which ecstasy always has played in Islamic spirituality. Although Ghazālī cites numerous traditions with precedents during the Prophet's lifetime for the later Sufi practice of *samā'*, in regard to the actual experience of ecstasy by the Prophet himself, he gave solely one example: that of a pious Sufi, in retreat in Mecca, who, during a vision, beheld the Prophet listening to poetry in a *samā'* session, "slapping his chest like an ecstatic (*kā'l-wājid*)."[39]

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the theological bases of Rūmī's religion of music and poetry were already anticipated by Ghazālī in this book, which enumerates seven reasons why listening to poetry is more conducive to ecstasy than hearing the cantillation of the Qur'ān. His basic argument is that the musical harmony, ecstatic transports, and ravishingly beautiful imagery of erotic poetry are capable of touching the heart more deeply than even the divine strains of the Muslim missal. This is because the heart is habituated to hearing the latter and so—more often than not—becomes disinclined to be aroused to experience any further raptures from its audition. Poetry, on the other hand, especially when graced by a beautiful singing voice, easily induces ecstasy.[40]

[36] Thus, Shiblī (d. 334/945), describing *wajd*, said: "When I suppose that *I* have lost it, I find it and whenever I imagine that *I* have found it, I lose it." Nūrī (d. 295/907) likewise pronounced, "Finding (*wajd*) is the losing of personal being in the Divinely Found or Existent One" (cited by J. Nurbakhsh, *Sufi Symbolism I*, p. 182).

[37] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, III:97.

[38] Ibid., III:95.

[39] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Damascus: n.d., n.p. 4 vols.), II, p. 238.

[40] For an extended discussion of Ghazālī's views on the experiences of *wajd* in listening to

Clarifying the place of ecstasy in Muslim spiritual life, Ghazālī maintains that there are altogether seven different instances where poetry is usually permitted, if not actually required, for the believer to use. Only the last two instances—listening to music and poetry by romantic lovers for longing and love to be aroused,[41] and the *samā'* of God's lovers[42]—need to be considered here, since they formed the theological grounds for Rūmī's adoption of verse and song as his key contemplative practice.

Listening to poetry arouses yearning (*shawq*)[43] in the lover of God, which in turn results in what are called "mystical states (*aḥwāl*) which in the language of the Sufis are called 'ecstasy' (*wajd*), derived from 'finding' (*wujūd*) and 'meeting' (*muṣadafa*). That is to say, the Sufi encounters in himself states which he had not encountered before he attended *samā'*." Like the classical Sufis before him, Ghazālī here considers *wajd* to be a chamberlain escorting the mystic into the inner sanctum of higher visionary experiences (*mushāhadāt wa mukāshafāt*) "which are the ultimate object of the lovers of God."[44] *Wajd* is the sister of mystical feeling and consciousness (*ḥāl*).[45]

Samā' proceeds from contemplation to action in three distinct stages: understanding (*fahm*) —> ecstasy (*wajd*) —> dance (*raqṣ*), ecstasy occupying the intermediate degree, midway between rational contemplation and physical action. Concerning stage one, underlining the rational basis of ecstasy, he notes that "the first degree in *samā'* (listening to music) is understanding (*fahm*) what is heard and then applying this to a meaning which occurs to the listener. The fruit of such understanding is ecstasy

the Qur'ān and poetry, see my "The Sacred Music of Islam," pp. 19-29.

[41] Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, pp. 228-29.

[42] Ibid., II, pp. 229-35.

[43] See L. Lewisohn, "Shawḳ," EI², IX, pp. 376-77.

[44] Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, pp. 246-47.

[45] In this regard, 'Azīz-i Nasafī (d. between 1282-1300) regards *wajd* as the lowest degree of spiritual knowledge: "Know that *wajd* literally means 'to find,' but according to the Sufis it involves a special kind of 'finding' relating to heart's discovery of something from the supernal world of the invisible (*'ālam-i ghayb*). That is to say, when the eye of the heart is first opened and the heart apprehends something from that realm, it is called *wajd*. When such 'finding' (*wajd*) is amplified, it is called 'visionary unveiling' (*kashf*). When that 'visionary unveiling' increases and becomes clearer, it is called 'gnosis' (*ma'rifat*). When that 'gnosis' increases and becomes even clearer, it is called 'contemplative witnessing' (*mushāhada*). And finally, when the mystic transgresses beyond all the veils, it is called 'spiritual observation' (*mu'āyina*). This is the way of the people of Sufism and this their terminology" (*Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed. Aḥmad Mahdavī Dāmghānī [Tehran: BTNK, 1359 A.Hsh./1980], p. 136).

(*wajd*), which in turn engenders stirring of the limbs [to dance]."[46] Ecstatic consciousness is not *irrational* but *supra-rational* since it is based on a highly emotionalized, yet nonetheless *rational* understanding of the meaning of poetry. The ecstatic must first understand what he hears in order to attain to the certainty of the "ecstasy which transcends the understanding."

Since ecstasy, as the second degree after "understanding" (*fahm*), constitutes, in contemplative terms, the most important aspect of *samā'*, Ghazālī devotes some eight pages of intricate analysis to its typology and meaning.[47] Quoting with approbation the pronouncement of Dhū'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859) that "*samā'* is a divine infusion (*warīd al-Ḥaqq*) which rouses the heart to seek God. One who hearkens to it with sincerity realizes the divine Truth, but one who attends to it with his sensual ear becomes a heretic," Ghazālī comments that in stating that audition "unsettles and rouses the heart to seek God," it is actually *wajd* which Dhū'l-Nūn had in mind, "for it is ecstasy which he found (*yajiduhu*) during that divine infusion which entered him in *samā'*."[48]

While arguing that audition is entirely a subjective experience, Ghazālī paradoxically defends the *objective reality* of *wajd*. Thus, any soul spiritually attuned to the harmonies Yonder may experience ecstasy in this lower world; even as a Sufi who does not know Arabic upon hearing a verse of poetry in that tongue may be sent into raptures which are even completely genuine since

> The ecstasy of one consumed by the love of God Almighty is in proportion to his understanding (*fahm*); his understanding is in proportion to his imagination, and it is not necessary that what he chooses to imagine be in accordance with the poet's meaning or language. Nonetheless, such ecstasy is true and real (*fa'hadhā'l-wajd ḥaqqan wa ṣidqan*).[49]

If *samā'* is a stimulus to the imagination, its resultant ecstasies are the fruit of poetic meanings *understood* and spiritual realities *intuited* by *imaginal* rather than merely *cognitive* processes. As Fritz Meier comments apropos of the last-cited passage: "What matters is that something in the

[46] Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, p. 253.

[47] Ibid., II, pp. 257-65; Macdonald, "Emotional Religion in Islam," part 2, pp. 719-48.

[48] Ibid., II, p. 257.

[49] Ibid., II, p. 249.

poem 'coincides with the mystic's situation so that like steel it strikes sparks from the flints in his heart' and thus causes the fire which one calls ecstasy."[50] But this ecstatic insight and understanding of poetry, whether through reason or imagination, varies from seeker to seeker, from lover to lover. The simple disciple's (*al-murīd*) ecstasy is based on rote belief and faith (*i'tiqād taqlīdī*), those who are not full adepts but do possess ecstasy (*arbāb al-wajd*) only experience an intoxication which dazes them like an intoxicant (*al-sukr al-madhish*), while the mature, discerning gnostic's rapture derives from a truly inspired certitude (*yaqīn kashfī ḥaqīqī*).[51]

Ultimately, poetically described spiritual realities (*ma'ānī*) and mystic raptures vary according to the listeners' states of mind or heart. Citing a paradoxical verse: "Your love is all parting; your affection all animosity; your union distance, and your peace all war," Ghazālī notes that "upon hearing this verse Shiblī would often throw himself into ecstasy (*kathīran mā yatawājad*)." He breaks the levels of ecstasy down into four authentic types as experienced by true mystics during audition of a given verse. As different as they are in degree, they all are equally true.

Of the four, the highest type of ecstasy experienced in response to such a verse corresponds to the supreme type of Love. Ghazālī gives the passionate death of Abū'l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907) who, transported by a flight of *tawājud*, ran into a reed-bed where he cut his feet and bled to death, as the supreme example and "greatest cause of love of God, the dearest and rarest of all kinds of love."[52] Nūrī is presented by the great theologian as the supreme master of the path of ecstasy in Sufism in his book on *samā'* and *wajd*. (In this context, it may be recalled that Nūrī was the first Sufi to have spoken of passionate love and to have applied the term *'ishq* to the love of God.) Nūrī's ecstasy during *samā'*, states Ghazālī, exemplifies the Sufi's annihilation-in-heart (*fanā' qalb*) in God. Such ecstasy "is of the highest degree, belonging to those sincere in their understanding and ecstasy (*al-ṣadīqīn fi'l-fahm wa'l-wajd*). If *samā'* is based merely on [fleeting] mystical states (*al-aḥwāl*), being tainted with the material consciousness of the flesh and its human characteristics, it falls short of the most perfect degree and degenerates into a kind of deformity. True perfection lies in the complete annihilation of human selfhood

[50] Fritz Meier, "The Dervish Dance: An Attempt at an Overview," in Meier, *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*, trans. John O'Kane (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 37.

[51] Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, p. 255.

[52] Ibid., IV, p. 307.

and its states, in not paying attention to such things . . . but hearing [only] God, in God, through God, and from God."[53]

Ecstasy and Ineffability

The topos of the ineffability of *wajd* had been the object of much meditation among the early classical Sufis long before Ghazālī's systematic exposition of the mystical psychology of ecstasy. As 'Amr Ibn 'Uthmān al-Makkī (d. 297/909) observed: "It is impossible to express the nature of ecstasy in any terms, for it is God's mystery with the believers and those who have certitude."[54] Citing this statement, Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 606/1210) commented: "Its forms are infinite, for it has no limitation. What I have said is just a brief characterization of the reality of ecstasy for the discerning and wise man."[55] The poetry of Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 304/922), whose doctrines Rūmī greatly admired and emulated,[56] represented the supreme expression of the transcendental ineffability of mystical ecstasy among the mystics of the Baghdad School.[57]

Muḥammad ibn 'Abdī al-Jabbār Niffārī (d. 354/965), who belonged to the generation of Sufis following Makkī, in his "Book of Spiritual Stops" (*Kitāb al-Mawāqif*) used the terms *wajd*, *tawājud*, and *mawājīd* to denote the divide between expression and the inexpressible, verbal appearance and ineffable reality. Noting in *Mawqif* 34 that speech (*qāwl*), letters (*ḥarf*), and words are all veils which cause one to go astray, he states that whereas God's "speech induces ecstasy (*al-wajd*), the affecting of ecstasy (*al-tawājud*) by means of words only leads one [back] into the ecstasies (*mawājīd*) which were induced by words." Real ecstasy and existence, however, are beyond such states which are linked to what is merely verbally expressed, since "by definition, ecstasies induced by verbal utterances (*al-maqūlāt*) are blasphemy." Only that ecstasy is real which derives from the Prophet's would-be "illiteracy" which is, in fact, true knowledge.[58]

[53] Ibid., II, p. 256.

[54] Ibid., II, p. 257.

[55] Baqlī, *Mashrab al-arwāḥ*, ed. N.M. Hoca (Istanbul, 1973), p. 82.

[56] See the unpublished M.A. thesis (2012) by my student at the University of Exeter: Sarah Semnani, "The Influence of Mansur Hallaj on the Poetry and Sufism of Jalal al-Din Rumi."

[57] See Samah Selim, "Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj and the Poetry of Ecstasy," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, XXI/1 (1990), pp. 26-42.

[58] *The* Mawáqif *and* Mukhátabát *of Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdī'l-Jabbár al-Niffārī*, ed. and trans. A.J. Arberry (London: Luzac & Co., 1978 reprint), pp. 59-60 (my translation from the Arabic text).

This notion of ecstasy never approaching true revelation or transcending the "literacy" linked to rational and verbal means of expression is the subject of *Mawqif* 55, where his divine respondent tells him that "when you come to Me, cast all expression (*al-'ibārat*) behind you, and cast the spiritual meaning (*al-ma'nā*) after that expression, and cast ecstasy (*al-wajd*) after the meaning."[59] In Niffārī's mystical theology, all words, expressions, and meanings, and even the ecstatic states which derive from both, are ultimately veils; everything expressible, whether expressions entering into words or ecstatic states passing through the heart of the mystic, must be cast aside for one to attain the ineffable Beyond. In many places Rūmī alludes to this "revealing-concealing" quality of *samā'*, which simultaneously unveils and disguises higher realms of being. In the *Dīvān*, he writes:

> The music of *samā'*s like a window
> That lends access to your garden.
> The lovers lay their ear and heart
> Upon its sill to hear one note.
> That window is—alas—one grand veil,
> Although this veil's all sweet delight—
> Go, my noble friend and keep silent.[60]

Niffārī's contemporary, Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, devoted a long section to the interpretation of the ecstatic utterances of Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī (d. 261/875). Interpreting Bisṭāmī's saying: "I became a bird and did not cease to fly," Sarrāj states that "he meant by it denuding himself of his own power and ability in flight. . . . Such expressions can be found in the speech of the ecstatics and the love-lost. When the innermost conscience of the ecstatic's (*wājid*) heart is overpowered by remembrance of the One Who has enraptured him (*wajada bihi*), he displays all his states as the qualities of his beloved. Thus, Majnūn of the Banī 'Amir would declare 'Layla' whilst gazing on a wild beast, and exclaim 'Layla' when looking at the hills, and when looking at other people utter 'Layla,' until, when asked of his name and state, he responded only: 'Layla'."[61]

[59] Ibid., p. 92: v. 35, Arabic text.

[60] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, V, *ghazal* 2404:25392-25393, cited by Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 565, trans. LL.

[61] Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma' fī 'l-taṣawwuf*, ed. R.A. Nicholson (London/Leiden, 1914), pp. 380-95. See also Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, p. 221.

Here, *wajd* = *ekstasis*, the ineffable mystical divestment of transitory selfhood through love's transports, which fuses and unites the Sufi's separate personal identity with the Divine.

* * *

The genius of Rūmī was deeply affected by these classical Sufi doctrines of ecstasy which he manages to re-express in the *Mathnawī* and *Dīvān-i Shams*, although his poetic depictions there hardly resemble the prosaic analysis of the classical treatises, such as Kalābādhī's *Ta'arruf*, Sarrāj's *Kitāb al-Luma'*, and Hujwīrī's *Kashf al-maḥjūb*,[62] each containing separate chapters or sections devoted to *wajd*. Nevertheless, ecstasy and intoxication drive both the expression of his poetry, with Rūmī wielding the great stock of bacchanalian metaphors and images found in classical Persian poetry in a particularly dramatic way, so the reader/listener can grasp the substance of his ecstatic utterances beyond their mere semantic sense. Although the term "ecstasy" (*wajd*) itself may rarely cross the lips of the poet—despite the more than fifty references to various sorts of ecstasy in the *Mathnawī*[63]—this massive epic poem constitutes one long ode to ecstasy and intoxication. In fact, ecstasy is the veritable tropic inhabited by his verse's muse. If Rūmī penned no systematic excursus on *wajd*, his views on ecstasy are clearly revealed in tactile forms through the poet's depictions of intoxication, drinking, and dance, especially in the context of the practice and performance of *samā'*, which are examined below.

Ecstasy in Rūmī's *Mathnawī*

> What can I say—no vein of mine is sober—
> to explain that Friend who is beyond a friend?[64]

Rūmī's *Mathnawī-yi ma'nawī* is not only the greatest work of doctrinal Sufism ever composed in verse but it is a breviary of ecstatic paradoxes (*shaṭḥiyāt*), much of the monumental epic poem having been composed

[62] See for instance, Suhaylā Mūsavī, *Farhang-nāma-yi taṭbīqī: ta'rīfhā va iṣṭilāḥāt-i 'irfānī-yi* Kashf al-maḥjūb *va* Mirṣād al-'ibād (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zavvār, 1381 A.Hsh./2002), index, s.v. "*wajd*."

[63] See Nicholson's 'Subject Index' to the *Mathnawī*, p. 435: s.v. "Ecstasy." The actual term *wajd* is seldom used; see 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Sirr-i nay*, §367, II, pp. 694ff.

[64] Alan Williams, trans., *Rumi: Spiritual Verses, The First Book of the* Masnavi-ye ma'navi (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 18. *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, I:130.

during nightlong sessions of *samā'*, so that each individual verse is a gift and grace of an ecstatic insight inspired in him.[65] Since Rūmī composed his poetry, whether epic or lyric,[66] on the basis of direct experience of *samā'*, it can be said that the contemplative discipline of *samā'*, with its ecstatic blend of music and song, constituted the veritable conservatory of his poetic inspiration and the praxis underlying his poetics, as 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb maintains.[67]

During these nocturnal soirees, as Aflākī in numerous tales relates, Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī (to whom the *Mathnawī* was dedicated) wrote the verses down, before singing them back out loud to Mawlānā.[68] It is in probable reference to these gatherings that in Book III of the *Mathnawī* Rūmī reproaches a lackluster disciple for being ungrateful for the food of selflessness, intoxication, and ecstasy partaken from the table of the adepts:

> You loitered around the door of the heart,
> And stood upon the threshold of heart-adepts
> Where you drank your fill of *aqua vita*.
> Those heart-adepts by God's grace touched your soul;
> There at their door they vouchsafed nutriment
> Of loss of self, ecstasy, and drunken
> Intoxication.[69] Yet you've left their door
> And like a greedy bear you roam around
> The world's shops for patrons and pastries.[70]

[65] 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Arzish-i mīrāth-i ṣūfiyya* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1385 A.Hsh./ 2006), p. 96.

[66] See Sitāyishgar's extensive treatment of the relationship of his poetry to *samā'* in *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 539.

[67] "One of the particularities of Rūmī's spiritual path that distinguishes his order from other Sufi orders prevalent in Konya during his day and age, traces of which are found in some places in the *Mathnawī* and all throughout the *Dīvān-i Shams*, is his special focus on the rite of *samā'* and the overwhelming interest that he and his followers had for *samā'* and music. . . . Until the end of his life he practiced this discipline and made it the way of his followers" (Zarrīnkūb, *Bahr dar kūza: naqd u tafsīr-i qissahā va tamthīlāt-Mathnāwī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī, 1376 A.Hsh./1997, [7th printing]), p. 33 [§13]). Schimmel also remarks: "For Rumi himself, the whirling movement was an expression of his enraptured interior state which he, in most cases, could not control. Yet, regular *samā'* meetings were also held in his own house or in the houses of his friends" (*The Triumphal Sun* [London: Fine Books 1978], p. 217).

[68] *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*, II, p. 742, cited by Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 572.

[69] Rūmī's technical terms: *sukr*, *wajd*, *bī-kh"udī* in this line are entirely derived from the early Baghdad and Khurasan schools of Sufism.

[70] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, III:293-96.

Consistent with Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, all throughout the *Mathnawī* Rūmī invariably uses the term *wajd* to refer to a mystical state that befalls Sufis during *samā'*. This is revealed in one of the few instances where the poet actually uses the word *wajd* in reference to the Sufis' circle of remembrance of God (*ḥalqa*):

> When then at last the circle of those Sufis
> Who sought God's favor culminated in graces,
> They found fulfillment in ecstasy and joy.[71]

Whether it arouses joy, as Junayd preached, or grief, as Ibn 'Aṭā' asserted, *wajd* is always considered to be a divine mercy beneficial to the mystic since it renders him selfless and indemnifies him from sin. Being drunk and bereft of his wits, whatever an ecstatic utters is not considered reprehensible;[72] he is thus beyond reproach, at least theologically speaking, states Rūmī.[73] This antinomian doctrine is the chief moral underlying Rūmī's tale of Moses and the shepherd in Book II of the *Mathnawī*, where Moses symbolizes a desiccated theologian insensible to love's transports, and the shepherd depicts the ideal of the selfless, ecstatic lover whose words, notwithstanding outlandish theological deviancy, are effectively judged by God to be "above the law," in the transports of *wajd* beyond vice and virtue. In the following verses, God rebukes Moses for his rigidly legalistic attitude towards the shepherd's words of ecstasy:

> I have consigned a way for every one
> To every one a different idiom.
> For him it's praise, for you disparagement,
> for him it's honey, and for you it's poison.
> We are completely free from pure and impure,
> all kinds of slothfulness and speediness. . . .
> For Hindus, praise is couched in Hindi terms
> For Sindis, praise is couched in Sindi terms.
> I am not sanctified by their laudations!
> It's they who are made holy, strewing pearls.
> We look at neither languages nor words,
> but at the soul and at the inner state.

[71] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, II:203 (Nicholson's translation), cited by Nurbakhsh, *Sufi Symbolism*, I, pp. 175-76, trans. L.L.

[72] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, V:4102-03.

[73] Gawharīn, *Sharḥ-i iṣṭilāḥāt-i taṣawwuf*, vol. 9, p. 152, s.v. "*Wajd*."

Inspecting hearts, We see if they are humble
although the spoken words are not so humble.
Because the heart's the substance, speech is trivial
as it intrudes, the substance is the thing. . . .
The learned are a certain sort, O Moses!
Those burnt of soul and spirit are another!'
For lovers there's a burning every moment—
no tax or tithe befalls the ruined town!
If he speaks wrongly do not call him "wrong,"
or if the martyr's blood-soaked, do not wash him!
For martyrs, blood is better far than water,
this wrong is better than a hundred rights.
Within the *Ka'ba* there's no *qibla* rule—
What if the pearl diver has no snowshoes?!
Don't ask directions from the roaring drunkard!
Why ask a threadbare man to do your darning?
The faith of love is separate from all others
For lovers, faith and piety are God.[74]

Ecstasy and Ecumenism

As the above story reveals, one of the key elements of ecstatic experience in Sufi Islam is the intuition of the existence of a higher "religion of love" (*madhhab-i 'ishq*) effectively beyond all formal religious denominations.[75] This "religion of love" movement in classical Persian Sufi poetry[76] normally showcased Rūmī's last-cited verse ("The faith of love . . .") as its most popular adage. A more literal translation of the verse, which ideally encapsulates the ecumenical spirit of the Sufi cult of love in Islam, is as follows:

[74] I am grateful to Prof. Alan Williams for providing me his unpublished translation of these verses; for the original verses in the *Mathnawī*, see Isti'lamī's edition: II:1756-59; 1761-65; 1768-74.

[75] Keeping in mind the dubious historicity of Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad-i Aflākī's account in the *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*, ed. Tahsin Yazıcı (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1959), I, p. 561 (3:§546), precisely this idea is expounded by Rūmī in the context of defending his practice of *samā'*, where this anonymous verse is cited: "The learning which is obtained in the *madrasa*, / That is one thing. Love is something else again" (John O'Kane, trans., *The Feats of the Knowers of God* [*Manāqeb al-'āreftn*] [Leiden: Brill, 2002], p. 388).

[76] For greater elaboration of this theme, see Husayn Ghomshei, "The Principles of the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry," esp. the section on "The Religion of Love in Rūmī," pp. 81-83.

Love's state is apart
    from religions and faith
God is the lover's religion—
    God is the lover's state.

Since the ecstatic's utterances, even when full of explicit Qur'ānic or Ḥadīth references, often overstep the boundaries of exoteric Islam, they acquire in the process an extraordinarily universal significance easily apprehended and appreciated by laymen and non-initiates. Such verbal transgressions are technically termed *shaṭḥ* (lit. "water overflowing its banks"[77]) and an entire genre of theopathic expression couched in the form of proverbs known as "ecstatic paradoxes" (*shaṭḥiyāt*), spawned by such experiences of mystical rapture and transport soon came into existence.[78]

Rūmī's *Mathnawī* overflows with ecstatic *shaṭḥiyāt* that are startlingly ecumenical in content. In the following verses that ostensibly describe the drunkenness of human passion, Rūmī appeals to the all-encompassing divine mercy that has intoxicated sinners and misled them to be preoccupied with worldly riches and pleasures. According to *Sharī'a* law, a drunkard cannot be punished until he has become sober; so to remain forever drunk and bereft of one's senses, he argues, takes one beyond the Canon Law into a higher condition of being:

Since it is you who has made me so drunk,
Don't lash me with your whip: the *Sharī'a*
States drunks must not be thrashed if they're still drunk.
When I wake up and get drink's fumes out of my brain
Then beat me all you like—since hey! You won't find me
A sober guy, not yesterday and not today!
Whoever drinks from your goblet, oh gracious Lord
Is free forever from sobriety; he's got
No mind to heed the lash and whip of Canon Law.[79]

In this passage, ecstatic intoxication is viewed by Rūmī as an annihilating force that leads to true existence (*wujūd*) in God. His views

[77] The standard Sufi etymology as given by Abū Naṣr Sarrāj of Ṭūs (d. 378/988): see Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany: SUNY, 1985), p. 12.

[78] The best study of which is Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy*. The most famous work in this genre in Persian is Rūzbihān Baqlī's *Sharḥ-i shaṭḥiyāt: Commentaire sur les paradoxes des soufies*, ed. Henry Corbin (Tehran: Institut Français d'Iranologie de Téhéran, 1981).

[79] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, V:4202-04.

in this regard exactly parallel those of Junayd, Shiblī, Nūrī and other members of the School of Baghdad surveyed above. Rūmī adds that just as one realizes true Existence through mystical intoxication and ecstasy, one regresses truly into non-existence if one falls into sobriety. If words of ecstasy like those of Bāyazīd—"How great is My Majesty!"[80]—are emitted by one, then one is to be excused, for being in a state of selflessness, one is beyond reproach:

> The selfless man is dead and gone, annulled
> In God he dwells, cocooned in the divine.
> His personality has passed away;
> He's but a looking-glass: the form therein
> You see is you, not him, and if you scoff
> And spit at him, it blows back in your face.[81]

In a word, here we can see how the transcendental experience of ecstasy leads the self-bereft mystic to pass beyond the boundaries of nomocentric *Sharī'a*-oriented Islam and enter a region where inter-religious ecumenism becomes the norm, triumphing over sectarian exclusivism.[82]

Ecstasy and Music

As discussed above, the connection between ecstasy (*wajd*) and music (*samā'*) in Sufism was theologically authorized by Ghazālī, who devoted an entire book of his colossal opus, the *Iḥyā 'ulūm al-dīn*, to explaining the orthodox religious bases and correct theological applications of music and ecstasy. The pre-eminent place and significance of *samā'* for the stimulation of ecstasy (*wajd*) is apparent in numerous passages in Rūmī's *Mathnawī* and *Dīvān-i Shams*.[83] In his *Mathnawī* in particular, the sacred

[80] *Subḥānī mā a'aẓam sha'nī*. For an excellent discussion of this saying of Bāyazīd and its various occurrences and interpretations in previous classical Sufi texts, see Nicholson's commentary on the *Mathnawī*, IV:2101-02 (Heading).

[81] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, IV:2139-41.

[82] Another similar example of this may be cited here from the *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, where he states that the "Turks, Greeks, and the Arabs," if "they be lovers" during *samā'* will "become of one tongue through this meritorious music" (vol. I, *ghazal* 304:3329).

[83] The place of *samā'* in Rūmī's poetry, which has already been treated extensively by a number of other scholars, is not my concern here. For an exhaustive study of the place of *samā'* in Rūmī, see Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, pp. 534-81. Annemarie Schimmel's extensive treatment of Rūmī's immersion in *samā'* and its effect on his lyric poetry in her *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rūmī*, pp. 210-22, is also particularly

concert (*samā'*) figures as the key stimulant to ecstasy. The "Epistle to the Reed-flute"—*Nay-nāma*—which opens the poem makes this quite clear. That Rūmī was familiar with a diversity of musical instruments (*chang*, *kūs*, *ṭabl*, *surnā*, *ney*, *duhul*, *ṭablak*, *tanbūr*, etc. used by the Sufis in their concerts) is evident from many passages in the *Mathnawī* and the *Dīvān* in which these are celebrated.[84] Rūmī himself played the *rubāb*.[85] In the following passage, for instance, Rūmī refers to the audition of music by the Sufi saint Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Adham of Balkh (d. c. 165/782), who ruled as a king before he renounced the throne and converted to the life of a wandering dervish.

> From heaven's whirring spinning jenny we've received
> These tuneful strains and airs, philosophers thus believed.
> The circling gyres and the spheres' polyphony
> They maintained, gave men's voice and lutes this psalmody.
> Believers say those sounds came down from Paradise,
> Through Heaven's grace these shrill strains seem idyllic tunes.
> It was in Heaven we heard that dulcet measure.
> For all of us were bits and parts of Adam there.
> . . . That's why, for lovers, song and verse and music is

notable. Other key sources include: Franklin Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi*, pp. 309-13; 461-63; A. F. Ambrosio, "La danse des mevlevīs: histoire et symbolique," in A. F. Ambrosio, E. Pierunek, and Th. Zarcone (eds.), *Les derviches tourneurs. Doctrine, histoire et pratiques* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2006), pp. 123-68; Abū'l-Qāsim Tafaḍḍulī, *Samā'-i darvīshān dar turbat-i Mawlānā* (Tehran: Nashr-i Tanvīr, 1377 A.Hsh./1998 [3rd printing]), *passim*; Husayn Ḥaydarkhānī, *Samā'-i 'ārifān: baḥthī kāmil u farāgīr pirāmūn-i samā'* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sanā'ī, 1374 A.Hsh./1995), index, s.v. "Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Mawlawī"; Jean During, *Musique et extase: L'audition mystique dan la tradition soufie* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1988), index, s.v. "*samā'*."

[84] See Zarrīnkūb, *Sirr-i nay*, II, §367, p. 695; Muḥammad Riḍā Shafī'ī-Kadkanī (ed.), *Ghazaliyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sukhan, 1388 A.Hsh./2009), introduction, pp. 116f.; Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*, pp. 211-16; Abū'l-Qāsim Tafaḍḍulī, *Samā'-i darvīshān dar turbat-i Mawlānā* (Tehran: Nashr-i Tanvīr, 1377 A.Hsh./1998 [3rd printing]), pp. 178-96; Murtaḍā Fallāḥ, "Mūsīqī dar shi'r-i Mawlānā," *Mawlānā-pazhūhī* (1389 A.Hsh./2010), vol. 2, pp. 142-52, where specific verses from Rūmī's poetry related to these instruments are cited and discussed. Schimmel stresses that "the number of verses with musical allusions is almost unlimited in Rūmī's poetry. The poet cleverly connects the different instruments all of which serve, more or less, as symbols for his own spiritual experience: only the Eternal Musician can inspire him to sing and to speak poetry" (*The Triumphal Sun*, p. 215).

[85] 'Abd al-Bāqī Gūlpīnārlī [=Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı], *Mawlawiyya ba'd az Mawlānā*, trans. Tawfīq Subḥānī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Kayhān, 1366 A.Hsh./1987), p. 547.

Their food and drink, for there, their fancy finds focus,
There's concentration of the imagination,
One's inmost thoughts attain there invigoration;
In fact, by flute and horn find configuration.[86]

A *locus classicus* concerning the effect of music on the soul and the experience of ecstasy (*wajd*) during *samā'*, these verses from the *Mathnawī* give a good example of the poem's avowal of the sanctity of the powers of voice and verse to arouse ecstasy in the mystic.

Ecstasy in the Mathnawī*'s Qur'ānic Language*

Rūmī's consciousness was highly Qur'ānized, being steeped in the prophetological and hagiographical history of Islamic Sufism.[87] His poetry is so peppered with citations from the Muslim scripture that the Qur'ānocentric nature of his writings cannot be overemphasized; indeed, his *Mathnawī* has been called "the Qur'ān in Persian."[88] The following verses on divine drunkenness that contain references to various persons and doctrines mentioned in the Qur'ān exemplify his specifically Qur'ānocentric poetic vision:

The real wine is what flows from the wineskin of
Eternity, not one that makes you drunken for one night.
The Seven Sleepers[89] drank that real wine and lost
Their wits three centuries and nine years; such wine
That made Egyptian ladies slash their wrists,[90] go mad

[86] *Mathnawí*, ed. Nicholson, IV:732-36; 742-43, my translation. For an alternate translation of these lines see Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, p. 312.

[87] See John Renard, *All the King's Falcons: Rumi on Prophets and Revelation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

[88] On which, see: Bahā' al-Dīn Khurramshāhī, Siyāmak Mukhtārī, *Qur'ān va Mathnawī: Farhangvāra-yi ta'thīr-i āyāt-i Qur'ān dar adabiyāt-i Mathnawī* (Tehran: Nashr-i Qaṭra, 1384[2] A.Hsh./2005); Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, pp. 395-96; 418-19; and also Dr. Ghomshei's essay in this volume, pp. 7-9.

[89] A reference to the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus (Qur'ān, XVIII:8-25). This identification of the Seven Sleepers with the intoxicated mystic, who is enraptured in God and rendered selfless, reappears throughout the *Mathnawī* (e.g. see Nicholson's commentary on *Mathnawī*, I:392).

[90] Qur'ān, XII:31. The story of Zulaykhā's self-righteous female critics who slit their wrists at the sight of Joseph and at once repented of the prudery of their common moral code, having been stunned by his beauty, is one of the typical examples used by Rūmī to illustrate the sway and power of selfless ecstasy over the soul. See *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, V:3236-37.

As maenads, delirious in their love of Joseph.[91]

In the space of only three couplets cited here, references to three different passages from the Qur'ān appear. The above verses represent but a handful out of a myriad that are cited here merely to give a flavor of the Qur'ānic substratum of his ecstatic vision and expression.

Ecstasy and Supraconsciousness

Another key theme of the type of ecstatic intoxication praised by the Sage of Konya is that it produces a supraconscious awareness (*hūsh*) and intelligence (*'aql*), before which the analytical power of man's discursive mind seems feeble. In this context one may recall Ghazālī's observation that the rapture of the discerning gnostic derives from a truly inspired certitude (*yaqīn kashfī ḥaqīqī*). The higher forms of consciousness that exist are best realized by the mystic besotted in the passion of love.[92] When one loses one's reason in divine love, transcending ordinary rationality, one is given an intelligence that is ten—if not a myriad—times as powerful as the ordinary man's mind.[93]

Therefore, despite the appearance of "rationality" in Rūmī's doctrines of "higher reason" or divine intelligence in the *Mathnawī*, far from expressing a "mysticism of sobriety"[94] as one scholar has argued, as a poet he considered himself to be the mouthpiece of the divine *logos*,[95] one who is perpetually *entheos* ("full of the god") with Platonic *furor*, his poetry being the creation of what Plato calls "inspired madness."[96] It is in this spirit that he celebrates the lunacy of the lover and the "fine frenzy" of the poet's eye:

[91] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, IV:2097-99.

[92] Ibid., V:3233.

[93] Ibid., IV:1424-1427. See also Parī Rīahī, *'Aql az dīdgāh-i Mawlānā* (Tehran: Mu'assasah-i Pazhūhishī-yi Ḥikmat va Falsafa, 1384 A.Hsh./2005), pp. 165-216.

[94] I allude here to Bahā' al-Dīn Khurramshāhī's observation that "the *Mathnawī* represents the highest culmination of the mysticism of sobriety (*saḥw-āmīz*) which is more or less of a 'rationalistic' bent (*'aql-girāyāna*), although of course his reason is a divine and mystical intellectuality, not that of the philosophical or logical type, as contrasted to the *Dīvān-i Shams*, which represents the zenith of the mysticism of intoxication (*'irfān-i sukr āmīz*) in the Persian language" (Khurramshāhī, *Insānam ārizū'st*, p. 10).

[95] Anton-Hermann Chroust, "Inspiration in Ancient Greece," in Edward D. O'Connor, C.S.C. (ed.), *Charismatic Renewal* (London: SPCK, 1978), pp. 37-54.

[96] *Phaedrus* 245A.

Although your intellect fly up to heaven's gate
Your fowl that follows others' precedent
Pecks up from lowly soil all its beliefs.
For the soul all blind conformist knowledge breeds ill
And what is learned by imitation's all a bane,
Yet here we sit and say it's our very own.
We should discard this shabby baneful reason,
Embrace wise lunacy instead; reject and spurn
All that seems like profit to oneself.[97]

In fact, the sober consciousness (*hushyārī*) of the self-involved worldly man is understood by Rūmī to be an affliction that leads to separation, distinction, and division. Sobriety sets people apart from each other "like oil and water," whereas in the experience of the ecstasy of drunkenness and selflessness, class distinctions vanish, the king's throne and the judge's bench appear as one, so "they're soul within the body incarnate."

Those ardent spirits were so strong they could
    inflame the heads of kings and make them place
their crown upon their wine-boy's head. Such passion,
    such sedition it incited, that vassals
with suzerains, and slaves with princes then
    were kneaded into one mélange; their flesh
and bones dissolved away; the soul alone
    remained: the prince's throne, the judge's bench
were hybridized that moment into one.
    When sober, serf and king are separate,
like oil cast on to water; when they're stoned
    they're soul within the body incarnate.[98]

* * *

The above overview, unfortunately cursory, of Rūmī's doctrines of ecstasy, drunkenness (*sukr*, *mastī*), and selflessness (*bīkh*^{w}*udī*) in the *Mathnawī* demonstrates how integral the realization of rapture during *samā'* was to the whole poem's genesis. It also shows how central the terminology relating to the sphere of *wajd* is to his message. The keynote themes discussed above: the meta-ethical character and the ecumenical

[97] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, II:2326-28.

[98] Ibid., V:3456-60.

nature of the utterances of the mystic overcome by ecstasy, the stimulation of ecstasy through audition to music (*samā'*), the Qur'ānic diction that usually accompanies the poet's ecstatic expressions, and the transcendental intoxicated consciousness—"higher rationality"—of the experience of ecstasy, will all reappear with greater elaboration later on in the bacchanalian lyrics of the *Dīvān-i Shams*, as we shall see in the ensuing discussion.

Ecstasy and *Samā'* in Rūmī's *Dīvān-i Shams*

There are altogether 151 references to the word *samā'* in Rūmī's works, the vast majority of which (134 in total) occur in his *Dīwān-i kabīr*, also known as the *Kulliyāt-i Shams* or *Dīvān-i Shams* ("Shams' Book of Verse").[99] This voluminous collection of poetry that totals over 35,000 couplets is not only the largest book of mystical lyrics containing the widest, most diverse pattern of meters composed by any Persian poet to date, but also the most celebrated assemblage of ecstatic lyrical love poetry in all Islamic—if not in all world—literature.[100] The dominant register that characterizes this collection of lyrics is impassioned intoxication and Dionysian ecstasy.

As we have seen in the foregoing section on the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī's poetic genius owed much to the contemplative discipline of *samā'*. Overcome by ecstasies and raptures (*wajd*) vouchsafed to him during the *samā'* ceremony, in many instances his ecstatic poetry was an epiphenomenon of that mystical song and dance. In one *ghazal* he describes himself as "just

[99] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, ed. Furūzānfar; Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 537. There are only 17 references to *samā'* in the *Mathnawī*. For a full treatment of *samā'* in Rūmī's poetry, see *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, I, pp. 534-80.

[100] It contains 3,229 *ghazal*s that vary in length between 6 to over 60 couplets, 44 strope poems (*tarjī'āt*) totalling 1,700 verses, and about 2,000 quatrains (*rubā'iyāt*). For the full table of the meters in the *Dīvān*, see Finn Thiesen, *A Manual of Classical Persian Poetry* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1982), Appendix 3. "Out of the forty-eight meters used by Rūmī in his *ghazal*s, eighteen meters can be found that are extremely rare in Persian poetry or else had never been used before him. There are also at least sixteen different poetic meters which were his own innovation and invention!" (Taqī Purnāmdāriyān, *Dar sāyih-i āftāb: shi'r-i fārsī va sākht-shikanī dar shi'r-i Mawlawī* [Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sukhan, 1380 AHsh./2001], p. 166). "Rūmī's concentrated efforts to use a wide diversity of poetic meters and a variety of end-rhymes is unrivalled—in the *Dīvān*s of other Arabic or Persian poets nothing of its like can be found" (Muḥammad Riḍā Shafī'ī-Kadkanī [ed.], *Ghazaliyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* [Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sukhan, 1388 A.Hsh./2009], introduction, p. 116).

a drunk, an addict of *samā'*."[101] Most Iranian critics concur that Rūmī's lyrical poetry was overwhelmingly composed under the influence of the song, music, and dance of *samā'*.[102] Bahā al-Dīn Khurramshāhī, in his introduction to one of the best anthologies of Rūmī's *ghazal*s, writes:

> Most of Rūmī's lyrics (*ghazaliyāt*) were nurtured by the Sufi music concert (*samā'-parvar*), that is to say, they were either inspired by his participation in *samā'* or meant to inspire others to participate in *samā'*. The echo of the *daf* and *rubāb*, foot-stamping and the rising and stooping of dancing dervishes, overwhelmingly bear witness to his immersion in the experience and illumination [of *samā'*], celebrated in vibrant tones throughout all his *ghazal*s.[103]

Apart from the overt textual evidence demonstrating the musicality of Rūmī's poetry (countless *ghazal*s composed to drum-beat rhythms written in staccato meters, allegro in tempo, with lilting end-rhymes featuring choral refrains for use as versicles for Sufi *dhikr*[104]) and the fact that his lyrics possess greater diversity of musical rhythms and melodies than found in any other Persian poet,[105] codicological evidence also demonstrates that the practical use of his *Dīvān* by Mevlevi dervishes from its inception was a hymnbook for *samā'*, which is why his lyric poetry may be considered to be inseparable from its use in the Sufi concert, as A.J. Arberry has pointed out.[106] This facilitation and systemization of Rūmī's

[101] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, V, *ghazal* 2495, v. 26384. The couplet reads: *Man kih dar ān naẓāra-am, mast u samā'-bāra-am/ layk samā'-yi har kasī pāk nabāshad az manī*.

[102] "The Persian language in the lyrical poetry of Rūmī attained a degree so rich in respect to musicality that no other language can compete with it. . . . We must him consider him more than any other poet in the world as one who was aware of the importance of the need to preserve musicality in poetic meter and end-rhyme" (Shafī'ī-Kadkanī (ed.), *Ghazaliyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, introduction, pp. 113, 116). See similar remarks by J. C. Bürgel, "Ecstasy and Order: Two Structural Principles in the *Ghazal* Poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī," in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism*, Vol. II: *The Legacy of Mediæval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)*, pp. 61-74; 'Alī Dāshtī, *Sayrī dar Dīvān-i Shams* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Javīdān, 2535 Shāhanshāhī/1976 [5th printing]), pp. 31-32.

[103] Khurramshāhī, *Insānam ārizū'st*, p. 10.

[104] On which, see Fallāḥ, "Mūsīqī dar shi'r-i Mawlānā," pp. 137-63.

[105] Purnāmdāriyān, *Dar sāyih-i āftāb*, p. 165. On this subject, see also Jalāl al-Dīn Huma'ī, *Mawlawī-nāma: Mawlawī chi migūyad?* (Tehran: Nashr-i Humā, 1385 A.Hsh./ 2006), II, pp. 595-98.

[106] Commenting on the Chester Beatty codex, one of the oldest manuscripts used by Prof. Furūzānfar in preparing his critical edition of the *Dīvān-i Shams*, A.J. Arberry points out

poems for use in *samā'*, represents the well-documented practice of the "use of sung poetry as a support for *dhikr* . . . in the context of *samā'*" in the Persian Sufi tradition.[107] Wherever *samā'* was observed, if Aflākī is to be believed, Rūmī was often inspired to compose *ghazal*s, so that much of the *Dīvān* clearly comprises his versification of these sublime musical moments of inspiration (*awqāt*) expressive of higher states of consciousness (*ḥālāt*) experienced during *samā'*.[108]

Just as we have seen with the *Mathnawī*, the lyrical oeuvre of Rūmī's *Shams' Book of Verse* may thus largely be considered as inspired by the Muse of Islamic melopoeia—the Sufi *samā'* gathering. Given

that "the poems have been arranged group by group according to metre; then, within each group, alphabetically by rhyme. Moreover, the opening couplet of each separate poem has been inscribed in red ink, to facilitate speedy identification. The resulting impression is of a gigantic hymnbook; and this indeed may well have been the intention. When it is remembered that these poems were originally composed, and were thereafter chanted, as accompaniment to the sacred dance of the Mevlevi dervishes, it does not seem too fantastic to conclude that the Chester Beatty codex, which once belonged to a Mevlevi monastery in Cairo, was compiled in this fashion as a service-book, to help the cantor to choose speedily the poem appropriate in rhythm to the particular phase of the dance" (A.J. Arberry (trans.), *Mystical Poems of Rumi*, annotated by Hasan Javadi; foreword by Franklin Lewis [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009], pp. 29-30). That Arberry's judgement is by no means "fantastic" but absolutely correct, is corroborated by the fact that the Konya Manuscript (calligraphed during Rūmī's lifetime between 768-770/1366-1368, published in 2 vols. by Tawfīq Subḥānī (ed.), *Dīwān-i kabīr: Kulliyāt-i Shams-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥusayn Balkhī Rūmī ma'rūf bi Mawlawī* (Tehran: Anjumān-i āthār u mafākhir-i farhangī, 1386 A.Hsh./2007) is also arranged exactly like the Chester Beatty codex as a service-book according to meter and rhyme; in some cases, Rūmī's own poetic additions can be found on the margins of this manuscript (as Subḥānī notes, introduction, pp. lvii-lviii), demonstrating that the traditional use of the *Dīvān* was as a hymnal for singing during *samā'* concerts even during the poet's lifetime.

[107] See M.I. Waley, "Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism," in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *The Heritage of Sufism,* Vol. I: *Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi*, p. 518.

[108] In this respect I concur with the judgment of Mihdī Sitāyishgar who, in his substantial two-volume work devoted to the subject of music in Rūmī's poetry, comments that: "While dancing in *samā'*, certain poetic sentiments sprang to mind. These he expressed in metrical verses that in turn aroused ecstasy (*wajd*) in him. To the sound of music he would come into the middle of the assembly of *samā'* crying 'Hey'! Time and again, Rūmī repeated this action and little by little the disciples of Rūmī also entered into *samā'* collectively. These disciples, who became soon known as the *samā'iyūn*—Sacred Music Dancers—would then be invited as guests to private garden gatherings and Sufi *khānaqāh*s where the Mevlevi Dancers would be asked to perform. In this fashion, what was originally an ecstatic practice begun by Rūmī himself in the course of composing his own *ghazal*s, turned into a group activity of the *samā'iyūn*" (*Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 539). See also the various tales to this effect narrated in *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*, I, pp. 489ff, trans. J. O'Kane, *The Feats*, pp. 336ff. A similar judgement is delivered by 'Alī Dāshtī, *Sayrī dar Dīvān- Shams*, pp. 26-27.

that his devotion to *samā'* in the *Dīvān-i Shams* is more evident than in his other works, in what follows, I will sketch five essential dimensions—personal-mystical persuasion, poetic-aesthetic, mystical-ecstatic, contemplative-doxological, and cosmic-metaphysical—of this Dionysian vision animating its lyrics.

Samā' *as Mystical Persuasion*

Perhaps the most telling—and from a chronological standpoint certainly the earliest—account of the role that the practice of *samā'* played in Rūmī's life following his encounter with Shams-i Tabrīzī (November 2, 1244) is that given by his son Sulṭān Valad[109] in his *Ibtidā-nāma*. The following verses, translated below into prose, merit citation in this regard:

> Day and night he [Rūmī] danced listening to music, being on earth like the whirling firmament. His cries and laments reached to highest heaven, and his wailing was heard by the young and old alike. He gave silver and gold to musicians, bestowing whatever he had in the way of wealth and property upon them. He was never a moment without music (*samā'*) and dance (*raqṣ*), never resting either by night or day, so that there was not a single singer left whose voice had not turned as silent as a deaf-mute. Their throats were all hoarse from constant singing, and all of them gave up hope of gold and coins. All the singers were exhausted and fatigued, suffering from hangovers although they had not drunk any wine. They were tired of speaking, wailing, lamenting, and not sleeping. They were so exhausted that their souls were ready to leave their bodies and their hearts burnt out without being touched by fire. A huge commotion was stirred up throughout the city [of Konya]. Not just the city, but a riot occurred throughout all Time and Space. [People murmured]:
>
> > "What's happened to the great leader and authority of our age—who we thought was such a great Islamic judge and genius? Why, like some wild hysterical person, does he stir up such wanton passions, sometimes in private and sometimes in public? Due to his dire influence the common folk have abandoned the canon law of Islam.

[109] On whom see M.I. Waley, "Bahā'-al-Dīn Solṭān Walad," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, II, pp. 435-36.

> All have made themselves pawns to love. Cantors who specialized in Qur'ān cantillation have abandoned their profession. Instead they only recite poetry and frequent the company of musicians. Young and old alike care only to spend their time in song and dance (*samā'-bāra*), gallivanting about on the steed of love. In lieu of prayers and pious invocations they devote themselves to writing songs and composing rhymes; their entire devotional acts and works have become all but a song and dance. They consider everything delusion but love. They vaunt that their whole religion and faith as simply becoming a lover. This path they follow is neither Islam nor infidelity. The almighty king who all obey is Shams-i Tabrizi. All their works comprise drunkenness and selflessness. This erotic faith of theirs is utter heresy."
>
> [Rūmī's] opponents spoke like this out of extreme denial. They declared his works all contrary to religion and the holy law. They were philistines. They considered the very pith and life of Faith heresy, and labeled as lunacy Universal Intelligence.[110]

Keeping in mind that Sulṭān Valad's poetic biography of Rūmī was slanted towards magnifying his father's stature and solidifying his own place as founder of the Mevlevi Order in the eyes of posterity, his account, despite its hagiographical nature, nonetheless probably accurately documents Rūmī's overwhelming personal passion for audition to music and verse (*samā'*). Furthermore, there are numerous passages where Rūmī and his companions' wild intoxicated fervor (*shūr*) and entreaties and attempts to obtain ecstasy (*tawājud*) during *samā'* are described in even more vivid detail by Aflākī.[111] Just as with Sulṭān Valad's account, simply because so many of Aflākī's stories sometimes sound so completely fantastic, having been "written down with no regard to weeding out the factual or the likely from the implausible,"[112] which often mean his accounts "must be digested with a healthy dose of salt,"[113] these stories cannot be just dis-

[110] Cited by Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, pp. 533-34.

[111] *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*, I, pp. 232-33, trans. J. O'Kane, *The Feats*, pp. 161-62.

[112] Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, p. 250.

[113] Ibid., p. 43.

missed out of hand.[114] After Rūmī's death, the *samā'* ceremony continued to play a central role in the Mevlevi Order under Sulṭān Walad, his son and successor, and a century and a half later under Pīr Ādīl Chalabī (d. 865/1460) "it took on its definitive form,"[115] which we know today as the dance of the Whirling Dervishes.

Ecstasy, Higher Consciousness, and Poetic Inspiration

If, as has been argued, Rūmī's lyric and epic poetry and the philosophy of ecstasy that sustained them were inconceivable without *samā'*, it is clear that any study of his poetic inspiration cannot be disassociated from the principles of this ceremony. Indeed, the literary genre to which much of Rūmī's lyric poetry in the *Dīvān* belongs can be classified as "dance verse" or "musical lyrics" (*shi'r-i samā'ī*).[116] *Samā'* and the composition of poetry formed for Rūmī an indivisible unity,[117] since as a contemplative discipline *samā'* attuned his heart to other, ampler magnitudes, generating a higher consciousness that enabled him to gain access to an imaginative

[114] As the editor of the *Manāqib* points out, Aflākī's biography of Rūmī and other Mevlevi figures still remain of immense interest "from the standpoint of history, sociology, psychology, art, mysticism, and literature" (T. Yazıcı, "Aflākī 'Arefī, Shams al-Dīn," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, I, p. 567).

[115] Hülya Küçük, "Sulṭān Walad's Role in the Formation of the Mevlevi Sufi Order," *Mawlana Rumi Review*, III (2012), p. 35. For an interesting study of controversies regarding *samā'* in the later Mevlevi Order, see Alberto Fabio Ambrosio, "İsmā'īl Rusūshī Anḳaravī: An early Mevlevi intervention in the emerging Kadizadeli-Sufi conflict," in John J. Curry and Erik S. Ohlander (eds.), *Sufism and Society: Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World, 1200-1800* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 183-97.

[116] As Najīb Māyil Haravī clarifies in his *Andar ghazal-i kh*^{w}*īsh*, pp. 32-33. Jalāl al-Dīn Humā'ī adds: "His *ghazal*s are mostly written in the form of poems to be sung (*tarāna*), that is to say, lyrics (*shi'r-i mulḥūn*) composed according to fast rhythmic tunes (*ḍarbī-ahangī*). This is further clear evidence of his spiritual connection with the principles of the art of music and knowledge of musical cadences. Most of these poems were composed in a state of spiritual attraction (*jadhba*), divestment of material being (*inqiṭā'*), passion (*shūr*), love (*'ishq*), dance (*raqṣ*), and *samā'*, while waving his hands, stamping his feet, and whirling to the musical beats and melodies of the instruments being played, the *nay* and *rubāb* in particular" (*Mawlawī-nāma*, p. 596). Prof. Franklin Lewis has disputed the significance and impact of *samā'* upon Rūmī's poetic inspiration in a private correspondence with the author (Aug. 23, 2012), but does concede that "the rhythmic turning of *samā'* no doubt induced many an impromptu poem, and part of the reason Rumi composed so many poems may have been to provide his followers with a suitable repertoire of librettos for the *samā'*" (*Rumi: Past and Present*, pp. 314-15).

[117] See my "The Sacred Music of Islam," p. 28.

and invisible reality[118] from which so many of his poems and songs (*bayt u tarāna*) sprang,[119] as he affirms in one *ghazal*:

> *Samā'* is God's tether,
> Not song and verse, sport and play.
> Don't gaze with pride and despise
> As if awry our balladry.[120]

Jean During has argued that there are several factors that account for the close connection between ecstasy, *samā'*, and poetic inspiration in Rūmī's lyrical poetry:

- "Since both of them [that is, *samā'* and poetry] proceed from the same mystical state of ecstasy, Rūmī's poetry was as much an aid to the music of the spiritual concert as the result of the mystical state engendered within him by *samā'*.

- The same state of ecstasy is often a source of revelation and, in turn, of poetic inspiration.

- According to all evidence, Rūmī's poems, and particularly those in the *Dīvān* dedicated to Shams-i Tabrīzī . . . sometimes appear to have been written simply for the sake of their musicality. Nevertheless, there is never any sense of stylistic artifice aroused because that musicality is intended to prolong and amplify the mystical state of consciousness (*ḥāl*) in which discursive reason dissolves away."[121]

[118] As 'Alā al-Dawla Simnānī (d. 736/1326) put it: "Ordinary ascetics and devotees will never be able to take even one step in that realm where the adepts spread their wings in *samā'*" (*Muṣannafāt-i fārsī*, p. 128, cited by Haravī, *Andar ghazal*, p. 8).

[119] Firaydūn Sipahsālār notes that "Our sublime Master [Rūmī]—God bless him—used to write grand statements in exposition of the spiritual realities of *samā'*. Whoever persists in studying these remarks shall obtain sufficient interior illumination capable of fathoming their mysteries" (cited by Haravī, "Samā'-i Khudāvanagār," in *Andar ghazal*, p. 289). For the original see Firīdūn Sipahsālār, *Risāla-yi Sipahsālār dar manāqib-i Ḥaḍrat-Khudāvandagār*, ed. Muḥammad Afshīn-Vafā'ī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sukhan, 1387 [2nd printing]), pp. 58-59).

[120] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, vol. 5, *ghazal* 2374:25102.

[121] Jean During, *Musique et extase: L'audition mystique dan la tradition soufie* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1988), pp. 193-94, translation mine.

Just as Sulṭān Valad's account cited earlier bears witness and as Aflākī in numerous anecdotes confirms, Rūmī soon became notorious for his obsession with the song and dance of *samā'*. He paid scant regard to the reproach and abuse leveled at him that he was an idler lacking all sense of proper etiquette and pious dignity appropriate to the traditional Sufi shaykh, and flaunted instead his otherworldly bohemianism:

> "Music," someone said, "demeans status,
> and lessens your prestige and makes
> you lose your place in men's eyes."
> "I need no place," I said. "Your love's enough
> for me, this world or the next,
> of name, fame, state and circumstance."[122]

Underlying his *malāmatī* attitude of disregard for the scorn which his public displays of *samā'* in Konya were greeted by its highly conservative populace,[123] lay centuries of previous Sufis' engagement with music and erotic verse that deliberately flouted conventional codes of Muslim ethics, with a paramount place in society given to a contemplative elite of ecstatic virtuosi who aimed to elevate their Sufi votaries into an higher state of consciousness.[124] In the *Dīvān-i Shams* Rūmī describes those who profess the sanctity of the practice of *samā'* as God's intimate confidantes and supreme adepts. Elsewhere, he states that only those who profess (*iqrār*) to be drunk on this wine are the real savants and true intellectuals (*'āqil*), while those who cynically scoff and look with incredulity at the Sufi concert he dubs "dissenters" or "recreants" (*munkir*):

> Whoever's not intoxicated by the Sufi concert
> Is still a recreant although he may profess belief.
> But one who knows the taste and lore of wine,
> Call him intelligent—don't say he's just a barman.[125]

[122] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, ed. Furūzānfar, vol. 4, *ghazal* 2062:21784, cited by Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 564.

[123] See Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad-i Aflākī, *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*, ed. Tahsin Yazıcı (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1959), I, pp. 88-89, 104, trans. J. O'Kane, *The Feats*, pp. 66, 75. For an overview of opposition to *samā'* in thirteenth century Anatolia, see also Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, pp. 312-14.

[124] See Haravī, *Andar ghazal*, pp. 30-33, for a good overview of how Sufi poetry has been used in musical concerts (*shi'r-i samā'ī*) and the symbolism of *samā'*.

[125] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, vol. 3, *ghazal* 1157:12277-78, cited by Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 549. *Har kay ū rā samā' mast nakard /munkirash dān, agar chih kard iqrār // Har kay iqrār*

The Doxology of Samā': *Ecstasy and the Interior Dimension of Ritual Prayer*

One of the key principles of the "religion of love" in Sufism is that any act of devotion—ritual prayers, for example—must be animated by the spirit of ecstatic love to be genuine orations that are vouchsafed divine acceptance.[126] Unlike the Muslim's daily prayers that may be recited by rote and not necessarily thereby be rendered invalid according to *Sharī'a* law, the prayers of God's lovers, devoid of the corresponding ecstatic mystical state (*ḥāl*), constitute mere affectation. For this reason, Rūmī habitually referred to *samā'* as being "the ritual prayers of lovers" (*namāz-i 'ushshāq*), effectively elevating the ecstatic dance of the Sufi concert to the status of a sacred practice rivaling in importance the performance of Islamic ritual prayers.[127] Two anecdotes in Aflākī's *Manāqib al-'ārifīn* give a good taste of the debates conducted on the comparative merit of *ṣalāt* (Muslim ritual prayer) vs. *samā'* in Konya during this period:

> There were often times when the singers would become exhausted from the extreme duration of *samā'*. So Mondays and Thursdays [holy days when *dhikr* performances are held in many Muslim countries] they invariably showed up a little late to the *madrasa*. Rūmī would say, "Since we don't have access to the lovers' ritual prayers (*namāz-i 'ushshāq*), at least let us perform our dawn prayers." He would then perform a few prostrations and genuflections of the Muslim ritual prayer until the singers arrived when the dancers would begin their Sufi concert (*pāy-kūbandagān samā' mīkardand*).
>
> Similarly, one day when the musicians were playing the *rubāb* out of devotion to Rūmī, he became transported in ecstasy. An esteemed friend suddenly entered the hall announcing, "Afternoon prayers are now being held." Mawlānā paused a moment, and then he exclaimed: "No, no! *That* afternoon prayer is of one sort, and *this* afternoon prayer [listening to the *rubāb*] of another sort. Both incite us towards God, the former calling outwardly to

kard u bāda shināKht / 'āqilash nām nih, magū khammār.

[126] See Ghomshei, "The Principles of the Religion of Love," pp. 77-84.

[127] Aflākī, *Manāqib*, I, p. 394, cited by Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 542. See also the comparisons made between the prostrations and genuflections of ritual prayer (*namāz*) and movements in *samā'* by Rūmī's biographer, Firīdūn Sipahsālār, "Samā'-i Khudāvanagār," cited by Haravī, *Andar ghazal*, p. 289.

the divine service, and the latter inwardly summoning us to divine love and gnosis (*'ishq va ma'rifat-i ḥaqq*)."[128]

Even if such tales be apocryphal—and so many of the stories of Aflākī (who began writing his hagiography of Rūmī's life in 718/1318 and completed it circa 754/1353, some 70 years after Rūmī had died[129]) were clearly written in the candlelight of devotional verisimilitude rather than in the daylight of what's historically verifiable—these tales correctly underscore the centrality and significance of *samā'* and music in Rūmī's own spiritual life.

A well-known trope in Persian Sufi texts is that the performance of *samā'* when informed by ecstatic consciousness is preferable in certain instances to the ritually correct recitation of Muslim daily prayers,[130] since the presence of ecstasy in one's devotions was the touchstone of piety.[131]

[128] Aflākī, *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*, I, pp. 394-95 (§326, 327). My translation follows that of O'Kane, *The Feats*, p. 272, but with substantial modifications.

[129] Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, p. 250.

[130] The most famous anecdote regarding this classic Sufi trope is found in Muḥammad Ibn Munawwar's *Asrār at-tawḥīd fī maqāmāt Shaykh Abū Sa'īd*, ed. M.R. Shafī'ī-Kadkanī (Tehran: Āgāh, 1366 A.Hsh./1987), I, p. 226, where the following story is related about Shaykh Abū Sa'īd ibn Abī'l-Khayr (357/967-440/1048), credited as being the first master who formally institutionalized the practice of *samā'* in the Sufi *khānaqāh* in Iranian Islam. The Shaykh was visiting the town of Qāyin where he kept the company of a certain religious leader called Imām Khwāja Muḥammad Qāyin:

> Muḥammad Qāyin used to frequent all the *samā'* gatherings which the Shaykh [Abū Sa'īd] attended. One day during a banquet, the Sufis were all in the midst of *samā'* and the Shaykh experienced a mystical state and the entire company [of Sufis] was immersed in that mystical delight. It was a very joyous moment. The muezzin sounded the call for noonday prayers. The Shaykh continued to be preoccupied with his mystical state and the whole group was in ecstasy (*wajd*), dancing and letting out shouts. Despite these mystical circumstances, Imām Muḥammad Qāyin cried out: "Prayers! Prayers! (*Namāz! Namāz!*)." Our Shaykh replied, "We're all praying!" and went back to dancing as before. Imām Muḥammad left the assembly and occupied himself in saying his prayers. When the mystical state that had engaged them was over, the Shaykh then pronounced: "From the eastern horizon of the globe where the sun rises to the western rim where it sets there is nobody more distinguished and learned than this man—that is, Imām Muḥammad Qāyinī—but he doesn't have even a hair's-breadth of understanding of this topic (Sufism)" (trans. John O'Kane, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness* [*Asrār al-Towḥīd*] [Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda 1982], p. 342, with modifications).

[131] The *Ḥādīth* sustaining this doctrine ("Ritual prayer is imperfect without the presence of heart") is cited in the *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, I: 381; see Furūzānfar, *Aḥadīth-i*

In this context, it may be underscored that *samā'* and music were "not simply articles of faith for Rūmī; they were religion and faith itself," as Husayn Ghomshei in his essay in this volume eloquently argues. In fact, the keynote tenet and perhaps the most unique aspect of Rūmī's mystical theology is music:

> This science of music is the faith that I profess;
> On this I pin my faith, as God is my witness.[132]

Despite this emphasis on the importance of the cultivation of *samā'* as a contemplative discipline, many of the deepest meditations in the *Mathnawī* concern the attainment of ecstasy and selflessness by means of ritual prayer. "Prayer is one of the most important features in Maulana's work," observed Annemarie Schimmel. "In a number of lyrical poems the borderline between love poem and prayer is blurred . . . the poet easily switches from what seems to be an ecstatic love verse to a deep-felt prayer."[133] However, in his lyrics in the *Dīvān-i Shams*, it is the degree of *ecstasy* in the performance of ritual prayer that is always of the essence. In the following *ghazal*, Rūmī's description of "the drunkards' prayers (*namāz-i mastān*)" effectively subverts the entire tradition of sobriety and temperance characteristic of the conventional juridical outlook on ritual prayer in Islam. Whereas the Qur'ān warns the believer not to "approach prayer when you are drunk" (IV:46), Rūmī lets us know that his intoxication is inspired by a fresh "faith of fire and wine"; his religion of love is full of ecstasy stimulated directly by God:

> As dusk descends all men
> for vespers light a lamp
> But me, I sit with the Friend
> behold her image in mind,
> Wailing with sobs of grief,
> groaning with sighs of lamentation. . . .
> When with tears I make ablutions
> my prayers stir up a fire

Mathnawī (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1335 A.Hsh./1956; reprinted Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1361 A.Hsh./1982), p. 5, no. 10.

[132] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, vol. 1, *ghazal* 457:4842.

[133] *I am Wind You are Fire* (London and Boston: Shambala, 1992), p. 163.

whose flames at the muezzin's cry
burn to ashes the mosque's door!
Whither should I face to pray?
what *qibla* I knew has fled;
Which prayer did I omit;
alas, what test is this
which Fate has brought on us?
Wondrous are such prayers,
these drunken vespers and hymns,
orisons of lovers too drunk to pray—
Tell me if they're well-recited
orthodox by punctuation, precise in pitch,
for lovers in such drunkenness
know no time nor place.
Two prostrations, strange! was it
I made? Alas, was that the eighth?
Which Qur'ānic verse was it I read?
I forget, I swear I had no tongue!
How can I knock on God's door
—I have no hand or heart anymore.
Since hand and heart you've borne
O God, away from me
grant me, I beg, refuge!
So dazed am I when I pray I swear—
so incognizant—or who's before me,
that when I bend my knee, I've no conception
of prostration or genuflection.
From now on, I'll be like shadow, stirring
before each Imam, a motion dancing,
as light and shade that waxes and wanes
cast by a parasol's swaying.[134]

Just as the realization of ecstasy (*wajd*) lies at the heart of ritual prayer, rapture is also the touchstone of the authenticity of *samā'*. To perform *samā'* in a state of ecstasy is to reach Paradise. To engage in *samā'* without ecstasy is to be cast into the Inferno. When Rūmī was questioned about the mystery underlying *samā'*, Aflākī tells us he replied as follows:

[134] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, ed. Furūzānfar, vol. 6, *ghazal* 2831:30053-60.

> Theophanic revelation (*tajallī*) and the vision of God occur for the men of God more often during *samā'* than any other time. Through *samā'* they sally forth from the world of their self-existence (*hastī-yi khʷud*) and it transports them into other realms and ultimately brings them unto the *Visio Dei*. In sum, there is a kind of *samā'* that is forbidden (*harām*) . . . —which is utter infidelity (*kufr*). If a hand flails up in the dance of *samā'* without the right sort of mystical state of consciousness (*ḥāl*), that hand and foot will certainly experience the chastisement of hellfire. But any hand waved in the air inspired by that mystical state will certainly attain to Paradise. So there is a permissible *samā'* which pertains to those who practice asceticism and renunciation (*ahl-i riyāḍat va zuhd*) since their practice is performed with watery eyes and heartfelt warmth. *Samā'* such as this is a religious requirement (*farīḍa*). Such is the sacred music of those who experience ecstatic states of consciousness (*samā'-yi ahl-i ḥāl*) which is a religious duty (*farīḍa-yi 'ayn*) for them just like the duty of performing the five daily prayers and fasting during Ramadan. Thus, for adepts in ecstatic states of consciousness (*ahl-i ḥāl*), performing *samā'* is exactly like consuming bread and water when one needs them, which is religiously obligatory upon them for it sustains their life.[135]

Although Aflākī's "highly stylized and hagiographical"[136] narration renders it unlikely that these are Rūmī's literal words (the *Manāqib* having been compiled from largely oral sources decades after Rūmī died), his theosophical *apologia* for Rūmī's views on music—the criterion of *samā'* being the realization of genuine ecstasy (*wajd*) rather than merely the attempt to stimulate rapture (*tawājud*)—do echo authentic Sufi doctrines found in both classical and contemporary sources.[137] There are also numerous *ghazal*s in his *Dīvān* that express precisely these sentiments.[138] In this vein in the *Mathnawī*, he asserts:

[135] Aflākī, *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*, II, p. 658, cited by Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 545 (my translation; for an alternative translation, see O'Kane, *The Feats*, p. 454).

[136] Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, p. 251.

[137] For a good account of which see Javād Nūrbakhsh, *Samā'* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khānaqāh-i Ni'matullāhī 2535 Shāhanshāhī/1976), translated in his *In the Tavern of Ruin* (New York: KNP, 1976), chap. 4, pp. 32-62.

[138] See Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*, pp. 218-22.

Not every man attains the *samā'* true and pure,
Not every bird may feed on figs.[139]

That *samā'* was most likely the key essential contemplative discipline animating the incredible flowering of Rūmī's lyric poetry[140] seems to be further confirmed by its place as the keynote of the Mevlevi Order's sacred liturgy and doxology under the direction of his son and successor Sulṭān Valad. Of course, as reiterated above, since the presence of rapture and ecstasy during *samā'* are the key criteria of genuine spirituality and the absence thereof proof of skepticism and unbelief,[141] it is clear that in Rūmī's view, religion is essentially an ecstatic experience of communion with God animated by music. One finds much in Rūmī's lyrics in accordance with Shakespeare's view that

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night
And his affections dark as Erebus.
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.[142]

Indeed, Rūmī would seem to have anticipated the Bard's view of the moral nature of music's emotional impact in these verses:

Once all your fasting and your prayers are
proper and aright in God's sight, you're then
a proper hero and a champion.

[139] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, I:2763.

[140] Louis Martz's observation about the role of meditation in Donne and the poets of his school echoes my thesis on the central place of *samā'* in Rūmī's poetry and the poets of his school: "It may be easier for us to see Donne's originality, not as a meteoric burst, but as part of a normal, central tendency of religious life in his time. The 'metaphysical poets' may be seen, not as Donne and his school, but as a group of writers, widely different in temper and outlook, drawn together by resemblances that result, basically, from the common practice of certain methods of religious meditation. The direct influence of one of these poets upon another, though considerable, would thus become secondary: individual mastery of the art of meditation would lie behind the poetry and be the essence of their kinship" (*The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954], p. 2).

[141] E.g. *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, vol. 3, *ghazal* 1157:12277-78 cited above.

[142] *The Merchant of Venice*, V, 1:83-88, Lorenzo to Jessica.

Be pure, abased like dust on the threshold
of this seraglio; don't vaunt yourself
so much before the lovers' concert.
If you reject *samā'* and loathe the music
of lovers, come the Day of Judgment,
they'll raise you up amongst a pack of dogs.[143]

Cosmic Samā'

The terrestrial dance of the whirling dervishes is but a mirror of the whirling celestial spheres, for the *samā'* heard "whilst in this muddy vesture of decay" is a by-product of the heavenly "harmony in immortal souls."[144] The harkening of the physical ear here-below represents the soul's meager attempt to audit the choiring of the transcendental concert hymned by the divine mind and spirit:

The ear accustomed to the concord of sweet sound and verse
Hears it here on earth and above in the concert of the firmament.
The concert played on earth derives from the song of the spheres
Since what the body's ear hears here of song and verse
Comes from the concert there played by *Spiritus* and *Intellectus*.[145]

* * *

The sky is whirling like the mantle of a Sufi,
The Sufi therein unseen. Muslims, who's seen
A dervish robe to dance without a body?
The body moves, the robe cavorts; the body dances
Because the soul is touched and haltered down
By Love—the love of the one the soul adores.[146]

Emphasizing the other-worldly, celestial origin of music, he writes in one verse that the ladder of *samā'* is "higher than the roof of heaven,"

[143] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, vol. 4, *ghazal* 2021:21325-21327, cited by Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 549.

[144] *The Merchant of Venice*, V, 1:63-64, Lorenzo to Jessica.

[145] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, vol. 4, *ghazal* 1832:19254-19255, cited by Sitāyishgar, *Rubāb-i Rūmī*, p. 554.

[146] Ibid., vol. 4, *ghazal* 1936:20379-80.

for "there is music beyond this world and the next."[147] Every degree and level of being is drunk in ecstasy, the entire cosmos intoxicated, lost and bewildered by the musical concert that animates it. "The body is but a shadow cast on the earth from the pure soul of the lovers who cavort in the heaven of love. When the theophany of Divine beauty (*tajallī az jamāl-i Ḥaqq*) increases, one may behold all the atoms in heaven and earth drunk like Moses from God's epiphany."[148]

> You skies and spheres of heaven—how long
> Will you revolve? Go look at the whirligig of the elements:
> How water, air and earth and fire all are drunk.
> If this is what in form appears, don't ask
> About Reality, for *intellectus* and *spiritus* are stoned,
> The *vis aestimativa* intoxicated,
> The heart's *arcanum* drunk.[149]

* * *

> Every other second's breath there comes a prophet from
> The king welcoming union with the Friend and bearing
> The royal cup in hand. A salvo of applause
> From Universal Mind is heard. The parts and wholes
> Cavort and dance, and in the garden
> Rose and cypress humbly genuflect.[150]

The ecstatic intoxication of being is universal and ubiquitous. Drunkenness permeates the entire creation, transcending all opposites, uniting all the contraries of existence:

> The dance of Gabriel is out of love
> For God's seductive beauty;
> The ogress capers and cavorts
> Enamored of a pixie.[151]

[147] Ibid., vol. 3, *ghazal* 1290:13686-13687.

[148] Ibid., vol. 1, *ghazal* 398:4207-08.

[149] Ibid., vol. 1, *ghazal* 390:4141-42.

[150] Ibid., vol. 3, *ghazal* 1130:11919-20.

[151] Ibid., vol. 5, *ghazal* 2327:24646.

However, although the sun's intoxication moves giddy atoms to dance, like motes bobbing up and down in its rays, the real *samā'* lies within the human heart, where the God of Love perpetually dances:

> Love, who is kind to lovers, has returned
> To her own home. (Though one conceives of love
> As form, her form annuls all form).
> . . . These motes all dance like Sufis in *samā'*
> Before the sun, yet no one knows to what
> Discourse, drum beat or song tune they cavort.
> In every heart another beat and chord is struck.
> We all can see the dancers moving there:
> The players are a mystery that none can see.[152]

Conclusion

In this essay, an attempt has been made to link Rūmī's poetic inspiration to the spiritual psychology of *samā'* in general and to *wajd* in particular and thus demonstrate how deeply his poetry was affected by the sanctity of music and song. The inspiration of Rūmī's poetry, it has been argued, largely derives from the contemplative discipline of the *samā'*, the Sufi concert, which itself belongs to the poetic discourse of the "science of mystical states" (*'ilm al-aḥwāl*) in Sufism. These higher states of consciousness were expressed in his verse through poetic symbolism drawn from a bacchanalian lexicon couched in an antinomian Sufi tavern slang that paradoxically was both public, being a matter of common literary knowledge, and hermetic, using an esoteric symbolic code, a kind of mystical drunkards' lexicon whose key terms were wine, wine-cups, cup-bearers, intoxication, rapture, and ecstasy.

As we have seen, Rūmī's poetry gave poetic expression to many of the key doctrines of ecstasy found in the tenth-century Baghdad School of Sufism, doctrines which had developed out of speculations concerning the mystical psychology of annihilation (*fanā'*). The theoretical foundations for Rūmī's religion of music and poetry were already been laid down in the late eleventh and early twelfth century by Ghazālī's *Kitāb ādāb al-samā'y wa'l-wajd* that had consecrated and provided theological justification for the practice of *samā'* for Muslim mystics for centuries to come.

[152] Ibid., vol. 3, *ghazal* 1195:12709, 12713, 12714, 12715.

Rūmī's poetry was a poetic species of this Sufi form of ecstasy born of the marriage between Sufi musicology and its doctrines of ecstasy. In this respect, it is useful to remember that the practice of *samā'* in the Mawlawī Order had *ecstasy* as its leitmotif, as Fritz Meier emphasizes:

> In the environment of the Mawlawī order, which was founded in Anatolia in the 13th century by Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn-i Rūmī, the dance developed into an obligatory means of inducing ecstasy, i.e. in the series of preparations before an experience it occupied the position of *tawājud*, which naturally entailed a change of character. Among the Mawlawīs it turned into a well-rehearsed circle dance. . . . When the dance begins and ends is defined by music. *Here ecstasy is no longer the cause but the goal of the dance*. Actually, the Mawlawīs themselves often conceive of their circle dance as the ritual enactment of cosmic events. . . . *But the practical purpose of the dance is to induce ecstasy.*[153]

Although this marriage between the science of music and the theosophy of ecstasy does not in any way "explain away" the miraculous phenomenon of Rūmī's poetic genius or make his *Mathnawī* or *Dīvān-i Shams* any less momentously ineffable or monumentally inimitable as works of poetry, it gives us a practical dimension to the remarkable inspiration animating his verse. The Muse of the *Mathnawī* may still remain masked, but at least we know her name now: Music.

> This science of music is the faith that I profess;
> On this I pin my faith, as God is my witness.[154]

One final consideration concerns the spiritual purpose underlying Rūmī's poetry. Generated from the contemplative discipline of *samā'*, his verse, as this essay has demonstrated, was largely inspired by ecstasies enjoyed therein. His lyrics were used in turn as a hymnal by Sufi devotees during *samā'* concerts to evoke further ecstasy. No critical approach to his poetry which would detach the literary vehicle of his verse from its teleological tenor and metaphysical message can therefore be productive. Insofar as existence (*wujūd*) born of mystical consciousness (*ḥāl*) is only found (*wajd*) through passing away in ecstasy, the process of coming to grasp the full nature of his poetry necessarily requires a kind of aesthetic

[153] Meier, "The Dervish Dance," p. 40, italics mine.

[154] *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, I, *ghazal* 457:4842.

and mental *tawājud* on the part of the reader, involving appreciation of the necessity of rapture as a prerequisite, leading to ecstasy as the consequence of any real existential understanding of his poetry.

PART II

Rūmī's Sufi Ecumenism

"One Shrine Alone": Christians, Sufis, and the Vision of Mawlānā

RODERICK GRIERSON

In all mosques, temples, churches
I find one shrine alone.[1]

Despite the confusions, ambiguities, and paradoxes of our own day, it seems to me that we have a curious tendency to assume that we nevertheless know what it is to be Muslim and what it is to be Christian. We know where the line between the two not only should be drawn but actually is drawn. Indeed, we know where it has always been drawn. In other words, we understand the essence of both traditions. I do not believe that most of us do, however. To be more precise, even if others are convinced that they know, I am not sure that I do.

I also suspect that one of the most important lessons of Seljuk, Beylik, and Ottoman history—if indeed we believe that history ought to provide us with lessons—is that there are versions of both Islam and Christianity that contradict or at least challenge many of our assumptions. What is more, their ability to do so might, if any of us paid attention to them, provide a means of escaping at least some of the nonsense that we tell ourselves these days about a "Clash of Civilizations."[2] I have in mind not

[1] The epigraph has been attributed to Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, notably by Talât Sait Halman, "Love is All: Mevlana's Poetry and Philosophy," in T. S. Halman and M. And, *Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi and the Whirling Dervishes*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Dost Yayınları, 1991), pp. 12-46, esp. p. 46. It is based upon a line that appears in a collection of translations by William Hastie, *The Festival of Spring from the Díván of Jeláleddín* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1903), p. 3, but without any indication of its origin beyond the statements on the title page and elsewhere in the book that Hastie worked from the German versions of Friedrich Rückert. Hastie and his translation were the subject of a lecture that I delivered at the University of Exeter in December 2011. Entitled "William Hastie's *Festival of Spring*: Hegel, Rumi, and the Cult of Omar Khayyam," it will appear in a future volume of the *Mawlana Rumi Review*. In March 2014, I offered a more detailed account in a series of four Robertson-Hastie Lectures at the University of Glasgow. The lectures will be published in 2015.

[2] The term is usually associated with Samuel Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, LXXII (Summer 1993), pp. 22-49, and with his subsequent book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schus-

only the malevolent insistence that we are in yet another stage of a perennial and ineluctable struggle between East and West, but the more benign and perhaps naive assertion that an earlier age—a caliphate in Baghdad, perhaps, or a sultanate in Konya—represented an ideal of brotherhood in which the sectarian rivalries and the murderous bigotry that so obviously blotted the copybook of Western Europe were largely or entirely unknown. If only we could return to such a state of prelapsarian harmony and concord, it is suggested, the world would be a better place.

While I might like to believe this, I also believe that historians should make at least some attempt to avoid imposing their hopes as well as their fears upon the objects of their study. We owe it, I would argue, to the memory of those whose legacy we find most inspiring. For if indeed Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī is able to speak across so many of the barriers or divisions that exist in our world, we should not, I think, reduce the magnitude of his achievement by placing him in a world that seems easier than it was. The times in which he lived were certainly no less fraught than our own, its crises no less urgent, its rivalries no less intricate, and its alliances no less compromising.

Historians of spirituality and mysticism are often seduced by a belief or at least a fervent hope that ultimately the differences between religious doctrines are irrelevant, that all religious truth must be in harmony because there is One God, and the truth about him must be, in some ultimate sense, one truth. If the great teachers of the past are truly great, therefore, they will have been teaching essentially or ultimately the same thing: a kind of ecumenical essence of spirituality,[3] a kernel of spiritual truth rather than the mere husk of religious dogma or ritual.[4] Even if we find discrepancies between them, their message will nevertheless be revealed as a truth beyond religious or sectarian divisions once we can penetrate to the fundamental unity that underlies the different ways in which they chose to speak to men and women who lived in different times and different places. If all this is true, religious affiliation cannot be of final or

ter, 1996). It was first used, however, in an article by Bernard Lewis entitled "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly*, CCLXVI (September 1990), pp. 47-60. Even though the thesis has been denounced as simplistic or tendentious, Robert Irwin has observed with some justification that it is not merely fantasy. See R. Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), p. 262.

[3] L. Lewisohn, "Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī," in D. Thomas and A. Mallet, eds., *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), vol. 4, pp. 486-503, esp. p. 489.

[4] W. Chittick, "The Pluralistic Vision of Persian Sufi Poetry," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, XIV (2003), pp. 423-28.

absolute significance when it is placed alongside the truth that lives within the heart or can be grasped with the eye of vision.

I have chosen the word "seduced" in part because I confess to being seduced by this vision myself, and in part because I remain suspicious of it. There are, of course, rival claims in which the particular is valued above the universal: the more nationalist or sectarian views of Sufi heroes that attempt to enlist them as champions of an authentic Turkish identity, for example, or of a Sunnī orthodoxy. Anyone who has enjoyed the privilege of working alongside Turkish colleagues is unlikely to underestimate the significance of these claims in social and political as well as in academic terms.[5] At least outside the Muslim world, however, a belief in *philosophia perennis*, an eternal and universal wisdom above any local religious distinction, has been of more general appeal.[6] My suspicion is that however eirenic the proposition might appear it also involves a kind of arrogance. It implies a refusal to listen to the voices of the past, an assumption that we know better than they did what they were really trying to say, a willingness to set aside the more rigorous and difficult truths, the more intractable facts of life, and discover or perhaps invent a truth that is more to our own liking, a truth that we find more comfortable and easier to bear. On the other hand, it may also involve a partisan sleight of hand, in which the eternal truth is presented as essentially one religion in particular rather than any of its rivals.

In a book entitled *The Philosophy of Ecstasy*, it may seem willful or even perverse to avert one's gaze from the kernel of spiritual truth and examine little more than the husk of external circumstance. However, if the spiritual teachings of the past really have the ability to speak to us now, it might be helpful to know that they were written in times no less alarming or frustrating than our own, by men or indeed women of intelligence who wrestled with the challenges of their lives as most of us wrestle with ours. To mention only the most relevant example, the arena in which Anatolian Sufis struggled to secure the patrons essential for their work was highly competitive, as competitive as any pursuit of corporate

[5] The question is discussed at length by Ahmed Yaşar Ocak in *Türkiye'de Tarihin Saptırılması Sürecinde Türk Sûfîliğine Bakışlar* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996) as well as in my introduction to a new English translation of the book entitled *Deviant Histories: New Perspectives on Turkish Sufism*, trans. S. Faiz, ed. R. Grierson (London and Nicosia: Near East University Press, 2014), pp. xiii-xxvii.

[6] A helpful introduction to the topic can be found in a review by C. W. Ernst, "Traditionalism, the Perennial Philosophy, and Islamic Studies," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, XXVIII (1994), pp. 176-81.

sponsorship or government funding in our own world.[7] The rich variety of Sufi traditions and the keen rivalries through which these emerged can easily be reduced to a dull uniformity if this is forgotten. I am not, I hope, adopting a cynical view of the spiritual life, but simply making a point that is obvious but often thought inconvenient: spirituality is firmly based in this world however much it looks to another.

With these considerations in mind, I should like to undertake two tasks as a way of examining the vexed relationship between the historical record and our anxieties about a modern world in which Muslims and Christians are inclined to regard each other with increasing suspicion.

An exegesis of statements made by Rūmī himself about Jesus, Christians, and Christianity was undertaken in an excellent article by Lloyd Ridgeon, but without any attempt to place Rūmī in the circumstances of life in the Seljuk sultanate of Rum.[8] The Seljuk dynasty itself is never mentioned, and there is no reference to primary sources for the history of the dynasty such as Ibn Bībī[9] or Abū al-Faraj,[10] or for Sufism in Anatolia

[7] For an incident in which the Mevlevi employed violence against rivals in Konya, see Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad-e Aflākī, *The Feats of the Knowers of God* (*Manāqeb al-'āreftn*), trans. J. O'Kane (Leiden: Brill, 2002), §8.16-17. An examination of the circumstances can be found in S. Vryonis, "The Political World of the Mevlevi Dervish Order in Asia Minor (13th-14th Century) as Reflected in the Mystical Writings of Eflaki," in C. N. Constantinides, N. M. Panagiotakes, E. Jeffreys, and A. D. Angelou, eds., *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ: Studies in Honour of Robert Browning* (Venice: Istituto ellenico de studi bizantini e postbizantini de Venezia, 1996), pp. 411-19. A.C.S. Peacock provides an excellent summary of the relationship between political and spiritual power in his article "Sufis and the Seljuk Court in Mongol Anatolia: Politics and Patronage in the Works of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Sulṭān Walad," in A.C.S. Peacock and S. N. Yıldız, eds., *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), pp. 206–26.

[8] L. Ridgeon, "Christianity as Portrayed by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī," in L. Ridgeon, ed., *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), pp. 99-126.

[9] Ibn Bībī, *El-Evāmirü'l-'Alā'iyye ft'l-Umūri'l-'Alā'iyye*, ed. A. S. Erzi (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu Yayınları, 1956). A valuable account of Ibn Bībī and other Persian sources is provided by C. Melville, "The Early Persian Historiography of Anatolia," in J. Pfeiffer and S. Quinn, eds., *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John Woods* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), pp. 135-66.

[10] Abū al-Faraj (Bar Hebraeus), *Chronicum ecclesiasticum*, 3 vols., ed. J.-B. Abbeloos and T. Lamy (Louvain: Peeters, 1872-77); idem. *Gregorii Barhebraei chronicum syriacum*, ed. P. Bedjan (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1890). Historians without a knowledge of Syriac often rely for the latter on an English translation provided by E.A.W. Budge in *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l-Faraj, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician, Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus. Being the First Part of his Political History of the World*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1932). However, Budge published at a truly phenomenal rate and his translations are often less reliable than later generations might have expected.

such as the *Manāqeb al-'ārefīn*[11] or the *Velayetname*,[12] or to fundamental secondary literature such as the books and articles written by Mehmed Fuad Köprülü,[13] Claude Cahen,[14] Speros Vryonis,[15] Irène Mélikoff,[16] or Ahmet Yaşar Ocak.[17] It is no criticism of an excellent piece of work to

[11] Aflākī, *The Feats of the Knowers of God*, trans. J. O'Kane. The standard edition of the Persian text is Şams al-Dīn Aḥmed al-Aflākī al-'Ārifī, *Manāḳib al-'Āriflīn*, ed. T. Yazıcı, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1959 and 1961). The editor also produced a Turkish translation: Ahmed Eflâkî, *Âriflerin Menkıbileri* (*Mevlânâ ve Etrafındakiler*), trans. T. Yazıcı, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1964).

[12] The standard edition is still A. Gölpınarlı, ed., *Vilâyet-name: Manâkıb-ı Hünkâr Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli* (Istanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1958).

[13] Due to the efforts of the apparently indefatigable Gary Leiser, the most important books and many of the most important articles by Köprülü have been translated into English. See inter alia "Anadolu'da İslâmiyet: Türk İstilâsından Sonra Anadolu Tarih-i Dinisine Bir Nazar ve Bu Tarihin Menbaları," *Darülfünün Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, II (1922-23), pp. 281-311, 361-84, and 457-86, which has been published in English as *Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion* (*Prolegomena*), trans. G. Leiser (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993) and *Les origines de l'empire ottoman* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1935), which has been published in English as *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*, trans. G. Leiser (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992) from *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuruluşu*, a later Turkish version that was first published at Ankara in 1959 by Türk Tarihi Kurumu Basımevi.

[14] See C. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1968), as well as a collection of important articles reprinted in his *Turcobyzantina et Oriens Christianus* (London: Variorum, 1974).

[15] In particular, see S. Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1971). The book remains indispensable more than forty years after its publication. The author himself has considered more recent developments in "*The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*: The Book in Light of Subsequent Scholarship, 1971-98," in A. Eastmond, ed., *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 1-15.

[16] In addition to preparing editions of several essential texts, Irène Mélikoff published a monograph about Hājī Bektāsh Velī entitled *Hadji Bektach: un mythe et ses avatars* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) and three volumes of collected essays devoted to the history of Sufism in Anatolia: *Sur les traces du soufisme turc: recherches sur l'Islam populaire en Anatolie* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 1992); *De l'épopée au mythe: itinéraire turcologique* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 1995); and *Au banquet des Quarante: exploration au coeur du Bektachisme-Alevisme* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 2001). A brief but nevertheless valuable critique of her work is provided by M. Dressler, *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 256–60.

[17] Ahmet Yaşar Ocak has published a large number of books and articles, many of which are cited in the bibliography to the present article. A longer list is included my introduction his *Deviant Histories: New Perspectives on Turkish Sufism*, trans. S. Faiz, ed. R. Grierson (London and Nicosia: Near East University Press, 2014). The book is a collection of essays that

suggest that it seems to reflect divisions between academic disciplines that still survive: Rūmī is presented as a Persian mystical poet and he is discussed in the context of Sufism, the Qur'ān, and doctrinal differences between Islam and Christianity; he is not considered as the subject of a Turkish dynasty in Anatolia during the thirteenth century and he is not discussed in the light of modern Turkish scholarship or of modern Western scholarship about this dynasty, if indeed there is still a difference.[18] More recent contributions, especially an impressive account by Leonard Lewisohn, do consider sources other than Rūmī himself, but are inclined to treat them as if they were offering evidence for the attitudes of Christians and Jews that can simply be treated as fact.[19] In any case, both authors are largely concerned with questions other than the circumstances of life in Anatolia under the Seljuk sultans. Most modern Turkish historians have shown no more enthusiasm for discussing Rūmī as a Sufi living in Anatolia during the thirteenth century. The reasons for this have been examined in detail by Ahmet Yaşar Ocak,[20] and I shall touch on them briefly in the following pages. As an attempt to complement rather than contradict several articles that I admire, I should therefore like to consider first the ethnic and religious diversity of the Seljuk sultanate of Rum, and then to examine some of the obstacles that modern scholars have encountered when they try to assess the implications or consequences of this diversity.

The author of a recent survey of Turkish history has observed that Turks need to ask what they owe to "ancient native Turkish tradition, Persia, Byzantium, Islam, what sort of Islam, and conscious westernization."[21] Each of these categories, even the last, is directly relevant to an understanding of Anatolia during the sultanate of Rum.

was originally issued in a single volume as *Türkiye'de Tarihin Saptırılması Sürecinde Türk Sûfîliğine Bakışlar* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996) and offers a highly critical and indeed iconoclastic approach to the study of Sufism in Turkey. For a discussion of why his approach is not as iconoclastic as it might have been, see Dressler, *Writing Religion*, pp. 260-68.

[18] In the decade that has passed since Lloyd Ridgeon's essay was published, research into the Seljuk sultanate of Rum has begun to accelerate. A number of books and articles of fundamental importance by Carole Hillenbrand, Gary Leiser, Andrew Peacock, Ethel Sara Wolper, and Sara Nur Yıldız are cited in the bibliography. At the time of writing, S. N. Yıldız, *Mongol Rule in Seljuk Anatolia: The Politics of Conquest and History-Writing, 1243-1282* is still eagerly awaited.

[19] Lewisohn, "Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī," pp. 486-503.

[20] Ocak devotes considerable space to what he sees as the failures of Turkish historiography in *Türkiye'de Tarihin Saptırılması Sürecinde Türk Sûfîliğine Bakışlar* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996).

[21] N. Stone, *Turkey: A Short Introduction* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2010), p. 9.

Indeed, I would suggest an addition—what sort of Byzantium—as a way of including the diversity of Syrian, Armenian, and Georgian Christians and their often vexed relationships with each other, with the Byzantine Empire, and with the Turkish states that replaced it. Even if the present essay is already too lengthy to allow a detailed discussion of any of these topics, they should be kept in mind if one is hoping to understand something of the society in which Rūmī lived, a world shaped in ways that often remain obscure and invariably appear complicated whenever they can be traced. My hope is that we can then understand why statements attributed to Rūmī or to other dervishes in thirteenth century Anatolia may not have meant what we often assume. In other words, even if Rūmī claimed to have seen "one shrine alone," what might this shrine have been? I shall therefore begin not with the life or the teachings of Rūmī but with his death and his funeral.

"Two Hundred Religions"

As any student of Rūmī will know already, the funeral is described in the *Manāqeb al-'ārefīn* by Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad Aflākī, a Mevlevi dervish who began to compile his account forty-five years after Rūmī died.[22] According to Aflākī, once the body of Rūmī had been placed on the litter, those who were present uncovered their heads and began to weep. Walking in the funeral procession and tearing their clothes were members of several different communities or nations including Christians, Jews, Greeks, Arabs, and Turks. They raised their holy books, and they read verses from the Psalms, the Pentateuch, and the Gospels in accordance with their own customs. Evidently, the Muslims who saw the spectacle could not restrain them, even if they beat them with clubs or swords.

When news of the disturbance reached the sultan and his minister, the leading monks and priests were summoned and ordered to explain themselves. Why should the funeral be any concern of theirs, given that Rūmī had obviously been Muslim? Despite their differences in religion, they apparently replied that they saw in Rūmī the true nature of Christ, of Moses, and indeed of all the prophets who appeared in their own scriptures. Muslims might claim that Rūmī was the Muḥammad of his day, but Christians would claim him as the Jesus of his day and Jews as the Moses of his day. They recalled Rūmī himself saying that seventy-two sects heard their own mysteries in his words, that he was a flute in tune with

[22] Aflākī, *The Feats of the Knowers of God*, trans. J. O'Kane, §3.580.

two hundred religions. They described Rūmī as the sun of truth that shone upon the world and observed that everyone loves the sun that brings light into their lives. A Greek priest compared Rūmī to bread, which everyone needs in order to live. Would a hungry man, he asked, turn away from it?

Although Aflākī was born after the death of Rūmī, he would have been able to rely on earlier written records and on the testimony of those who had witnessed the events that he describes. Nevertheless, his book is clearly hagiographical rather than biographical, and is filled with spectacular events to demonstrate the unique holiness of its subject. For greater rhetorical effect, therefore, his account of the funeral might have emphasized the incredulity of Muslims, including the Seljuk sultan, and exaggerated their astonishment that anyone of another faith should be devoted to a Muslim teacher. Yet their amazement and indeed their violence are curious, it seems to me, given that Aflākī is generally assumed to provide evidence for the close relationship between Rūmī or his followers and members of the other religious communities in Konya.[23] As I have remarked elsewhere,[24] the account of his funeral is often seen as proof of the religious tolerance of the Seljuk era. It seems more likely to me that it demonstrates the opposite.

Furthermore, who are "the Muslims" that Aflākī mentions? Why are they apparently distinct from "the Turks" or "the Arabs"? And why do "Greeks" seem to be different from "Christians"? Some of the categories in the list appear to be ethnic and some religious: there were evidently Christians who were not Greek, and if Turks were a separate group from Muslims, who exactly were they? In order to answer these questions, or at least to understand why they are questions that need to be asked, it is important to recall that at this point in the thirteenth century, some two hundred years after Ālp Arslān defeated an immense Byzantine army at Manzikert in 1071 and enabled Turkish tribes to enter Anatolia almost without impediment, most of the population of cities such as Konya still seems to have been Christian rather than Muslim. Even though military power and political authority had passed into the hands of a Turkish dynasty, and the surrounding countryside had in many places been occupied by Turkish nomads, the greater part of the people who lived in Konya would have belonged to Christian communities that had lived there for centuries.

[23] See, for example, Lewisohn, "Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī," pp. 486-503.

[24] R. Grierson, "'We Believe in Your Prophet': Rumi, Palamas, and the Conversion of Anatolia," *Mawlana Rumi Review*, II (2011), pp. 96-124.

However, to see the question largely in terms of two rival religions may be to misunderstand it.[25] The arrival of the Turks produced a complex series of rivalries in which suspicion or hostility between Christians and Muslims was only one factor, and perhaps not even the most important. Although the Seljuk sultans were of Turkish origin, they had become increasingly enamoured with Persianate culture as they moved west from Turkestan into Khurasan, established an empire in Iran, and employed a bureaucratic elite that had acquired through the rigorous education offered in *madrasa*s a knowledge of jurisprudence and other disciplines required to administer the institutions of an urban Muslim society. Rather than reflecting a decision to establish such a state in Anatolia, however, the victory at Manzikert and its consequences seem to have been largely fortuitous. Ālp Arslān was campaigning in northern Syria when he learned that the emperor Rōmanos Diogenēs had led a vast army into eastern Anatolia in the hope of preventing further incursions by Turkish nomads. He therefore turned north to engage it. Despite the magnitude of his victory, he made little attempt to consolidate his authority in Anatolia, having been distracted shortly afterward by a crisis in Transoxiana. Nevertheless, the region now lay undefended against ever larger numbers of nomads who may have seen themselves as Muslim but had been exposed to very little of the more orthodox versions of the faith expounded by the *'ulamā* and whose relationship with the court and its emissaries or functionaries would often be vexed.[26]

Modern Turkish historians who believe that the special genius of Turks has lain in the building of states[27] have often presented their arrival

[25] Anatolia in the eleventh and subsequent centuries is not unique in this sense. The same point has been made about encounters between Muslims and the inhabitants of conquered territories some four centuries earlier. Indeed, it is possible to present a credible argument that the study of Late Antiquity and of the later Byzantine Empire have been distorted by an excessive and at times exclusive concern with matters of religion. For a recent discussion of the question, see F. B. Flood, "Faith, Religion, and the Material Culture of Early Islam," in H. C. Evans and B. Ratliff, eds., *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition, 7th-9th Century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), pp. 244-57.

[26] In *Writing Religion*, Markus Dressler provides a lengthy and valuable account of the political agenda that has often lain behind the use of terms such as "orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy" by specialists in Turkish history. Although his case is well made, it should only with the greatest care be applied beyond his discussion of the ways in which a modern Alevi identity has been created. Displays of heterodox or antinomian behavior by Anatolian dervishes suggest that distinctions of this sort were understood very well in earlier centuries.

[27] See, as one example, the comments of İbrahim Kafesoğlu translated by Gary Leiser in *A History of the Seljuks: İbrahim Kafesoğlu's Interpretation and the Resulting Controversy* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), p. 83.

in Anatolia and their legacy as a far more orderly or systematic process than it was, a neat succession from the Seljuk sultanate to the Ottoman Empire and finally to the Republic of Turkey. However, the Seljuk sultanate was one of a number of Turkish principalities established in Anatolia—including the Danishmendids, Saltukids, Mangujekids, Artukids, and many others—and Seljuk sultans were often as preoccupied with these rivals as they were with the armies of the Christian empire to the west. Especially as primogeniture had not been the basis for succession among Turkish dynasties, disputes between claimants to the throne were frequent and often prolonged. Konya had not been the original Seljuk capital in Anatolia, and dynastic rivalry meant that it was not always the only capital. Even within what was ostensibly their own territory, the sultans could not exert complete control, given the movements of large numbers of nomadic tribesmen and their herds. In fact, Seljuk sultans remained more closely tied to these tribes than is often assumed, both through kinship and because they depended upon their support in battle. Seljuk military tactics that have been dismissed as wanton destruction and barbarism may be more explicable as a consequence of the need to secure tribal loyalty by finding new pasturage for nomadic herds and ensuring access to it rather than capturing and occupying territory indefinitely.[28]

The Turkmen nomads who moved into Anatolia were led by *baba*s who possessed both tribal and religious authority. These figures espoused a type of Sufi tradition more heterodox than the instruction offered in *madrasa*s either by *'ulamā* or by Sufi shaykhs who taught alongside them, even if such differences have been misunderstood as a radical or absolute contrast between Turkish and Iranian identities, between elite and popular forms of religion, or between high and low cultures.[29] Some of the more intriguing and indeed exotic forms of dervish, notably the Qalandars who were wandering in Anatolia while Rūmī was alive, could be said to represent a high and low culture simultaneously, ostentatiously heterodox or even deliberately antinomian and yet often born in privileged circumstances and provided with an elite education.[30]

[28] A.C.S. Peacock, "Nomadic Society and the Seljūq Campaigns in Caucasia," *Iran and the Caucasus*, IX (2005), pp. 205-30; idem, *Early Seljūq History: A New Interpretation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), esp. pp. 144-51.

[29] A.T. Karamustafa, "Early Sufism in Eastern Anatolia," in L. Lewisohn, ed. *The Heritage of Sufism*. Vol. I: *Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi (700-1300)* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), pp. 175-98.

[30] A.T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), pp. 4-11.

Distinctions can be exaggerated, therefore, but they should not be ignored. Islam in Anatolia was clearly not homogeneous or monolithic, and the contrast or tension between adherents of various forms of Islam is a recurring theme in Seljuk, Beylik, and Ottoman history. Scholars have been inclined to propose four or more varieties—even if they differ on exactly where and how the borders between them should be drawn—and this without considering the rivalries between different *madhhab*s or different Sufi *ṭarīqa*s or individual shaykhs.[31]

Relations between the Seljuk establishment and nomadic Turkmen became increasingly vexed as available land diminished during successive waves of migration and as the administration attempted to establish an economic structure based upon trade conducted through caravanserais and seaports, imposing taxes upon tribes that were unaccustomed to paying them. The policy provoked a number of rebellions, the most dramatic being the Babai Revolt of 1240, during which the followers of the Turkmen tribal and spiritual leader Bābā Ilyās-i Khurāsānī inflicted a series of defeats on Seljuk forces.[32] The rebellion is rightly described as a central event in Anatolian history,[33] and it so weakened the sultanate that effective resistance could not be offered when Mongol armies arrived in Anatolia soon after. A catastrophic defeat at Köse Dağ in 1243 allowed the sultan no choice but to accept Mongol suzerainty and the presence of a Mongol governor. In other words, final political authority was no longer in the hands of Muslim sultans but of Mongol khans to the east, whose

[31] See the discussion in my introduction to A. Y. Ocak, *Deviant Histories: New Perspectives on Turkish Sufism*, pp. xiii-xxxvii, esp. pp. xxii-xxvii. Victor Ménage, for example, suggests "Orthodox Islam," "Islamic Mysticism," "Ghazi Islam," and "the Islam of the Babas" in his article "The Islamization of Anatolia," in N. Levtzion, ed., *Conversion to Islam* (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1979), pp. 52-67. Ocak himself suggests "Political Islam," "Madrasa or Scriptural Islam," "Tekke or Mystical Islam," and "Popular Islam." Within the last two categories, he proposes a further distinction between Orthodox Sunnī and Heterodox versions. In addition to *Deviant Histories*, see his article "Islam in the Ottoman Empire: A Sociological Framework for a New Interpretation," *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, IX (2003), pp. 183-97.

[32] The most impressive account of the Babai Revolt is A. Y. Ocak, *La révolte de Baba Resul ou la formation de l'hétérodoxie musulmane en Anatolie au XIII^e siècle* (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu Basımevi, 1989). Anyone able to read Turkish should consult the most recent Turkish edition, which is an expanded version of the original French: *Babaîler İsyanı: Alevîliğin Tarihsel Yahut Altyapısı Anadolu'da İslâm-Türk Heterodoksisinin Teşekkülü* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2000).

[33] For example, the revolt is said to be "one of the defining moments" in "Türkmen-Seljuk-Christian relations" by S. E. Wolper, *Cities and Saints: Sufism and the Transformation of Urban Space in Medieval Anatolia* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), p. 101.

views on religion were usually eclectic and whose entourage included Buddhists, shamanists, and Christians. Nevertheless, however surprising it might seem, the arrival of the Mongols actually increased the rate at which Anatolia was Islamized. The territory of the Seljuk sultanate of Rum lay at the furthest extent of Mongol power and largely escaped the devastation that their armies had caused in Iran. It also became a haven for a Muslim administrative elite that had been deprived of its authority in Iran and fled to the west in the hope of finding refuge. Anatolia was not merely Islamized, therefore, it was Islamized because it was Iranized.[34]

During the Babai Revolt, there is some evidence that Christians fought alongside the followers of Bābā Ilyās.[35] And yet when the sultan Gīyāth al-Dīn Kay Khusraw II eventually suppressed the revolt, he was reported to have employed Frankish troops to do so.[36] In other words, Christians were involved with both sides of the conflict. This should not be thought unusual. At Köse Dağ, Christians fought as allies in both the Seljuk and the Mongol armies. Byzantine emperors too would seek Western help against Turkish enemies and Turkish help against Western enemies.[37] There has undoubtedly been a temptation to see a "Clash of Civilizations" in such conflicts, but even though a fierce rhetoric was used at the time to proclaim that one side or other was fighting for the true faith, and even though historians in the following centuries have been keen to make the claim despite its apparent anachronism, the dictates of *Realpolitik* or simply the facts on the ground were often very different.

Divided Loyalties

As Aflākī suggests when he describes the funeral procession of Rūmī, Christians in Anatolia were no less homogeneous than Muslims. In particular, we cannot assume that by definition they would have been Greek—however we define the term—although there were certainly large

[34] A valuable account of this transformation is provided by C. Hillenbrand, "Rāvandī, the Seljuk Court at Konya and the Persianisation of Anatolian Cities," *Mésogeios*, XXV-XXVI (2005), pp. 157-69.

[35] See Wolper, *Cities and Saints*, pp. 9-11.

[36] Simon de Saint-Quentin, *Histoire des Tartares*, ed. J. Richard (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1965), p. 64.

[37] A convenient summary of the complexities of such alliances is given by K. Fleet, "The Rise of the Ottomans," in M. Fierro, ed., *The New Cambridge History of Islam*. Vol. II: *The Western Islamic World, Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 313-31, esp. pp. 314-18.

numbers of Christians who spoke Greek and were in some way loyal to the imperial Church. Others were loyal to it as well, including a minority of Armenians who accepted the Chalcedonian theology of the imperial Church rather than the Nicene theology of the ancient Armenian Church. Not only did Armenians live in parts of Anatolia under Muslim rule, but independent Armenian principalities also flourished to the south of the sultanate in Cilicia. In the eastern parts of the sultanate, especially around Malatya, there were large numbers of Syrian Christians, who had been encouraged to move north in the tenth century when the Byzantine emperor Nikēphoros Phōkas tried to secure the eastern frontier by replacing Muslim inhabitants with Christians, a policy that we might now describe as "ethnic cleansing" even if its criteria were in the first instance religious rather than ethnic.[38] Relations between the Syrian patriarch and the Seljuk sultan were at times so close that Kilij Arslān II is said to have attributed his victories on the battlefield to the prayers of Michael the Great.[39] Especially for their medical skill, Syrian Christians from Malatya or even from Urfa, the ancient heartland of the Syriac language, were valued in the Seljuk capital. Georgians also served the sultan, especially as military alliances between the Seljuks of Rum and the Bagratids seemed to offer at least some hope that both could resist invasion from the east. Furthermore, there had been large numbers of Latin Christians in various parts of Anatolia since 1097, when the First Crusade began to arrive with the ostensible aim of delivering Eastern Christendom in general and Jerusalem in particular from the Turk. Since the Fourth Crusade in 1204, Constantinople itself had been occupied by a Latin emperor.

After centuries of theological conflict in which the power of a Christian state had been used in a vain attempt to impose Chalcedonian orthodoxy, it should not be surprising if the various Churches in Anatolia were inclined to regard each other with greater suspicion or even more overt hostility than they displayed toward Muslims. This is easily forgotten in a simplistic view of "the Christians" on one side and "the Muslims" on the other.

Furthermore, the lands in Central Asia from which the Seljuks first emerged had been characterized by no less religious and ethnic diversity than Anatolia. A number of sources suggest that the Seljuks had been asso-

[38] G. Dagron, "Minorités ethniques et religieuses dans l'Orient byzantin à la fin du X^e^ et au XI^e^ siècle: l'immigration syrienne," *Travaux et mémoires*, VI (1976), pp. 177-216.

[39] Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, ed. and tr. J.-B. Chabot, 5 vols. (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899-1924), vol. 3, pp. 394-95. The passage has been discussed by a number of scholars, including O. Turan, "Les souverains seldjoukides et leurs sujets non-musulmans," *Studia Islamica*, I (1953), pp. 65-100, esp. pp. 77-78.

ciated with the Khazars, a Turkish dynasty that converted to Judaism in the eighth century, although it is difficult to know if the claim is accurate.[40] It has also been suggested that the early Seljuks might have been Christian,[41] and indeed large numbers of Turks undoubtedly were Christian.[42] Among them were the Naiman and the Kerait, from whom the Mongol empire of Chengiz Khan emerged. Kerait princesses were members of the Mongol royal families, and when Hulāgu, the brother of the Great Khan Qubilai, rode west to conquer Iran, Iraq, and Syria, his Christian wife Dokuz Khātūn came with him. The general who led the Mongol armies during the capture and sack of Baghdad in 1258 was Christian as well. It is hardly surprising if some Christians who had lived under Muslim rule regarded the arrival of the Ilkhans as in effect a Christian invasion.[43]

The early history of Turkish dynasties in Central Asia is not the only point at which religious identity was set aside or at least treated as being of less than paramount significance. Although the Seljuks of Rum were accorded the conventional attributes and epithets of an Iranian ideal of Islamic kingship espoused by their bureaucrats, they were not always the implacable victors over the infidel that this heroic model assumes.[44] As they followed Turkish customs of succession brought from Central Asia, and as struggles among rival princes were frequent and vexed, they sought military help from Byzantine emperors on several occasions. According to the Syrian patriarch and chronicler Michael the Great, the first of the Seljuks to visit the Byzantine court was Rukn al-Dīn Mas'ūd I, who arrived in 1124 and requested military assistance against his brothers.[45]

[40] See Peacock, *Early Seljūq History: A New Interpretation*, pp. 27-35.

[41] The question is discussed by Franz Babinger, "Der Islam in Kleinasien: Neue Wege der Islamforschung," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, LXXVI (1922), pp. 126-52, esp. p. 130.

[42] A reliable survey is provided by W. Baum and D. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003). More recent research on the subject of Christianity in Central Asia can be found in D. Winkler and Li Tang, eds., *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia* (Berlin, Munster, Vienna, Zurich, and London: LIT Verlag, 2009).

[43] A concise account is provided by F. Micheau, "Eastern Christianities (Eleventh to Fourteenth Century): Copts, Melkites, Nestorians and Jacobites," in M. Angold, ed., *The Cambridge History of Christianity*. Vol. V: *Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 373-403, esp. pp. 386-87.

[44] See S. Mecit, "Kingship and Ideology under the Rum Seljuqs," in C. Lange and S. Mecit, eds., *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 63-78.

[45] D. Korobelnikov, "A Sultan in Constantinople: The Feasts of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kay-Khusraw I," in L. Brubaker and K. Linardou, eds., *Eat, Drink and Be Merry (Luke 12:19): Food*

More is known about his son, Kilij Arslān II, who appeared before the emperor Manuēl I Komnēnos in 1161 after he had been defeated both by the Byzantine general Iōannēs Kontostephanos and by the Danishmend king Yaghibasan. Kilij Arslān was apparently received in a solemn ceremony outside the great walls of the capital, during which he signed a treaty that awarded him the status of "friend," "retainer," and "son" of the emperor.[46]

This status would be revived during the reign of the youngest son of Kilij Arslān, Gīyāth al-Dīn Kay Khusraw I, who signed a treaty with the emperor Alexios III in 1195. Although he was hoping for military aid against his brother Rukn al-Dīn, who had deposed him, he found the emperor unwilling to support him against an older and apparently more powerful claimant. When he returned to Constantinople in 1200, however, he received a warmer welcome. He would remain in the capital for four years and would be baptized. The emperor not only acted as his godfather, but also adopted him as his son.[47]

There is no indication that Kay Khusraw regarded himself as a Christian or acted as a Christian in later life. Nevertheless, the ceremony is certainly an indication of the ways in which the Byzantine Empire even in decline could extend its influence beyond the reach of its military commanders, employing the splendors of its rituals to exert an undeniable attraction upon neighboring princes whose ambitions allowed them to be drawn into its orbit.[48] Indeed, Kay Khusraw seems to have displayed a sense of common purpose with the emperor on several occasions. As the armies of the Fourth Crusade began to attack Constantinople in the summer of 1204, he evidently helped the emperor escape into exile. Kay Khusraw himself departed with his retinue to the estates of the Byzantine aristocrat

and Wine in Byzantium, in Honour of Professor A.A.M. Bryer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 93-108, esp. pp. 93-94.

[46] Ibid., pp. 94-96.

[47] Ibid., 96-108.

[48] The most influential account of what modern strategists might call the projection of Byzantine "soft power" is D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971). From a large number of subsequent publications on the subject, two summaries by J. Shepard are especially important: "The Byzantine Commonwealth, 1000-1550," in M. Angold., ed., *The Cambridge History of Christianity*. Vol. V: *Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 3-52; "Byzantium's Overlapping Circles," in E. Jeffreys, ed., *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London, 21-26 April 2006*. Vol. I: *Plenary Papers* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 15-56. Shepard suggests that medieval Byzantium is probably best understood as a sphere of influence rather than a unitary state with precise borders and he describes the ways in which neighboring elites found association with the imperial capital to be increasingly attractive even as its military supremacy declined.

Manuēl Mavrozōmēs, remaining there until news arrived that his brother Rukn al-Din had died. When Kay Khusraw decided to recover his throne, Mavrozōmēs chose to accompany him, perhaps because the establishment of a Latin empire in Constantinople suggested that better prospects for him and his family might be found farther east. He married his daughter to the sultan and his sons joined him in entering Seljuk service.

At Konya, reports of the sultan's conduct while he was living with his Christian hosts seemed to have aroused a degree of hostility. *Fatwa*s were issued against him, and he responded by executing the *qādī* Tirmizī who wrote them.[49] If Kay Khusraw were struggling to assert himself, the presence at Konya of powerful Byzantine allies may have proved very helpful. Mavrozōmēs evidently made no attempt to change or to disguise his own Christian faith. Once members of the Byzantine elite, he and his family seem to have become members of a Seljuk elite, albeit Christian members of it.[50]

As Christians, they would not have been isolated at the Seljuk capital. It is worth recalling that both the mother and the wife of Kay Khusraw were Christian. Churches are known to have been built near the Seljuk palaces within the citadels of Konya, Gevele, and Alanya, evidently for Christian members of the court who would have been accompanied by their own clergy as well as other retainers and domestic servants. Even if Kay Khusraw did not live as a Christian himself, he did not escape the ties that had been forged in Constantinople. He would eventually die in a battle between two Byzantine factions, attempting to restore the fortunes of his godfather against Theodōros Laskaris, the husband of his adoptive sister Anna.

The wives of Seljuk sultans included not only Greek women, but Armenian and Georgian as well. Māh-peri Khātūn, the wife of 'Alā al-Dīn Kay Qubād I and the mother of Gīyāth al-Dīn Kay Khusraw II, was the daughter of Kyr Vard, the Armenian lord of Kalonoros who later became Seljuk governor. Her son Gīyāth al-Dīn Kay Khusraw married Tamar,

[49] H. İnalcık, "The Origins of Classical Ottoman Literature: Persian Tradition, Court Entertainments, and Court Poets," *Journal of Turkish Literature*, V (2008), pp. 5-75, esp. p. 21.

[50] Sara Nur Yıldız provides a valuable discussion of Mavrozōmēs, describing him as a member of the Seljuk elite and not as a Byzantine rebel who relied on Seljuk support to establish an independent state along the frontier between Byzantine and Seljuk territories. See her article "Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes and His Descendants at the Seljuk Court: The Formation of a Christian Seljuk-Komnenian Elite," in S. Leder, ed., *Crossroads between Latin Europe and the Near East: Corollaries of the Frankish Presence in the Eastern Mediterranean (12th-14th centuries)*, Istanbuler Texte und Studien, XXIV (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2011), pp. 55-77.

who was the daughter of Rusudan, a Georgian queen of the Bagratid dynasty and the Seljuk prince Mughīth al-Dīn Tughrilshāh. Her father had converted from Islam to Christianity in order to satisfy the terms of his marriage. In her own marriage, however, Tamar was apparently allowed to remain Christian.[51]

Marriage was also proposed between Kay Khusraw and Catholic women of distinguished lineage, and on similar terms. When the Latin emperor of Constantinople, Baldwin II, attempted to arrange such a marriage for his niece, he assured her mother that she would not only be allowed to retain her faith but would also be the wife of a sultan whose own mother had been raised as a Christian and chose to remain Christian. She would have her own chaplain, he promised, and a Christian household. The sultan would ensure that churches were built in all his cities. It was even suggested that the sultan himself might convert to Christianity, and the Byzantine polymath Nikēphoros Grēgoras implies that he did indeed enter discussions about doing so.[52]

Other prominent Christian families are known to have served the sultans at Konya, their presence creating what has been described as a reflection of the splendor and magnificence of the Byzantine court.[53] However, the *qāḍī* Tirmizī was not alone in denouncing such a relaxed attitude to confessional boundaries. One of the most famous examples of dissent appears in a letter sent to the Seljuk sultan 'Izz al-Dīn Kay Kawus I by the great Andalusian scholar and mystic Ibn al-'Arabī, who was living in Anatolia at the time. Although Ibn al-'Arabī had written at length of his devotion to Jesus, this does not seem to have softened his views of the ways in which Christians ought to be treated under Muslim law.[54]

He warns the sultan that the worst thing endured by Islam and by Muslims in the Seljuk sultanate is the sound of bells, which he describes as a manifestation of infidelity. He laments the disappearance of the restrictions instituted by the "Prince of Believers," 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb, upon Christian behavior. He insists that Christians in the sultanate must be forced to wear

[51] A.C.S. Peacock, "Georgia and the Anatolian Turks in the 12th and 13th Centuries," *Anatolian Studies*, LVI (2006), pp. 127-46, esp. p. 140.

[52] V. M. Tekinalp, "Palace Churches of the Anatolian Seljuks: Tolerance or Necessity?" *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, XXXIII (2009), pp. 148-67, esp. p. 163.

[53] V. A. Gordlevskii, *Gosudarstvo seldzhukidov Maloi Azii* (Moscow and Leningrad: Akademia Nauk, 1941), p. 157.

[54] Ibn al-'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, 4 vols. (Bulaq: Amire, AH 1329), vol. 4, p. 547. A valuable discussion of the passage has been published by G. Scattolin, "Sufism and Law in Islam: A Text of Ibn 'Arabī (560/1165-638/1240) on 'Protected People' (*Ahl al-ḏimma)*," *Islamochristiana*, XXIV (1998), pp. 37-53.

clothing that demonstrates their inferior status. They must not be allowed to build new churches or monasteries. In fact, they must not be allowed to repair any such buildings if they become dilapidated. They must not teach the Qur'ān to their children, they must not own horses, and so on.

The claim is often made that Islam was under threat when these words were written, and that Ibn al-'Arabī had been profoundly alarmed by Christian aggression during the *Reconquista* in Iberia.[55] These are perfectly reasonable observations, but they do not change the nature of what Ibn al-'Arabī actually wrote. A similar point could be made about letters composed by the Orthodox archbishop Grēgorios Palamas, the defining figure in the Hesychast tradition that is often compared with Sufism and a mystic of no less stature for Byzantine, Greek, or Russian spirituality than Ibn al-'Arabī is for Islamic. Despite claims that the letters written by Palamas in 1354 while he was a captive of the Ottoman emir Orhān reveal an enthusiasm for theological rapprochement between Christianity and Islam, they do nothing of the sort.[56] Palamas is relentless in his defense of Christian doctrine and the only rapprochement that he foresees is that Muslims will eventually accept it. Mystical attainment is unlikely to make one any more sanguine about threats to the community that nourished it, and we should not try to explain away what either of these men wrote in difficult times.

A Patchwork Culture

However strictly Ibn al-'Arabī or Palamas might have hoped to maintain a line of demarcation between Islam and Christianity, there is a substantial

[55] See, for example, C. Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn 'Arabī*, trans. P. Kingsley (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), pp. 234-36. The author attempts to exonerate Ibn al-'Arabī of any prejudice against Christians and dismisses the idea as preposterous. In doing so, she not only contradicts the plain meaning of the letter but also claims that such attitudes would seem perfectly reasonable because Christian minorities in the Seljuk sultanate needed to be suppressed before they could act in collusion with Crusaders. These arguments are clearly *parti pris*. While they are no more absurd than many of the claims made about Palamas, they are also no more persuasive. The reputation of neither needs to be defended in this way, it seems to me. Perhaps the most astute and therefore most helpful comment is that of Stephen Hirtenstein: "Whether this should be viewed as less than tolerant depends on how religious tolerance is defined: the institutionalized discrimination in traditional Islamic societies was intended to prevent persecution and to allow for gradual conversion . . ." See S. Hirtenstein, "Ibn 'Arabī. Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-'Arabī al-Ṭā'ī al-Ḥātimī," in D. Thomas and A. Mallet, eds., *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), vol. 4, pp. 145-49, esp. p. 149.

[56] Grierson, "'We Believe in Your Prophet,'" pp. 96-124.

amount of evidence that such boundaries were often ignored or at least treated as either movable or permeable. Nevertheless, it has seemed difficult to understand the motives involved and to assess the consequences, in part because modern scholars have been inclined to see the process in partisan and indeed moralistic terms, either applauding what is described as remarkable tolerance and even generosity of spirit on the part of Turkish Muslims or lamenting the destruction and eventual annihilation of ancient Christian societies in Anatolia as incontrovertible proof of a characteristic brutality, if not of Turks then at least of nomads.

While differences between national traditions of historiography undoubtedly exist,[57] it has become more fashionable to discard earlier assumptions about catastrophic change and concentrate instead upon the possibilities of continuity and transformation.[58] In such a context, the evidence of architecture, coinage, and other displays of dynastic patronage often provides an intriguing complement to what we know about the conversion of Anatolia from chronicles and other manuscript sources. The ambitions of sultans and other wealthy patrons ensured that the subjects of the sultanate of Rum or of the other Turkish states on its frontiers were surrounded by the outward and visible signs of a complex and apparently malleable cultural legacy. Among the more exotic to modern eyes is the copper coinage produced by the Danishmend dynasty, who established themselves in the northeast of Anatolia in the region of Sivas, Tokat, and Niksar, and were eventually absorbed into the sultanate of Rum in 1178. Although the coins were issued by Muslims, they included depictions of Christ with a cruciform nimbus and a Greek inscription, or a mounted figure of St. George, or other Christian heroes including even the Byzantine emperor.[59] The use of such Christian symbols by Muslims would seem to represent something rather different from a simple antithesis of Christianity and Islam. But if so, what was it?

[57] For a valuable discussion of the question see S. N. Yıldız, "Reconceptualizing the Seljuk-Cilician Frontier: Armenians, Latins, and Turks in Conflict and Alliance during the Early Thirteenth Century," in F. Curta, ed., *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, XII (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 91-120, esp. 91-94.

[58] See Flood, "Faith, Religion, and the Material Culture of Early Islam," pp. 244-57. Although the author is discussing Late Antiquity in particular, his comments can be applied more generally to the study of Christianity and Islam.

[59] R. Shukurov, "Christian Elements in the Identity of the Anatolian Turkmens (12th-13th Centuries)," *Cristianità d'Occidente e Cristianità d'Oriente*, Settimane di studio della Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull' Alto Medioevo, LI (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull' Alto Medioevo, 2004), pp. 707-64.

A similar conflation can be seen in public buildings commissioned by Danishmend, Seljuk, and other patrons, incorporating styles and motifs from earlier monuments and even decorated with inscriptions or sculptural details removed from them. The walls around Konya that the Seljuk sultan 'Alā al-Dīn Kay Qubād I began to construct in 1221 were evidently one of the most intriguing examples. They included classical remains such as a colossal statue of Hercules, funerary reliefs, and carved sarcophagus panels, as well as new figural reliefs depicting angels, lions, dragons, eagles, warriors, and other subjects.[60] Along with earlier inscriptions in Greek, the walls displayed quotations in Arabic from the Qur'ān and hadith and in Persian from the *Shāhnāmeh*. In other words, they proclaimed Seljuk rule by incorporating the legacy of a pre-Muslim Iranian past and a pre-Christian Greek past as well as a new Muslim dispensation.

This was culture as palimpsest, it would seem, in which later versions were written over the earlier, even though traces of the earlier would inevitably remain visible. But how much of the past did the new patrons intend to retain, and did their intentions towards it change as their political authority or military power waxed or waned? While new building programs undertaken by Danishmend or Seljuk patrons may seem to suggest a benign or tolerant gesture toward former Byzantine subjects or indeed toward the empire that still survived to the west, they may also reflect the challenges of ruling lands whose earlier inhabitants remained where they had been living and who were present in such large numbers that they needed to be encouraged rather than simply forced to accept new masters. There were too many of them and their rulers were too few. The solution required a compromise between continuity and innovation: too much of the former might mean that a new Muslim society could never be created; too much of the latter might mean that it would be rejected.

Throughout this process, however, it would seem likely that subject peoples were not the only intended audience. For Turks who had entered a region of established urban societies, the challenge of understanding its complex and exotic cultures may have been formidable. In this sense, a fusion of symbols may have been as much a part of enabling Turks to adapt to their new role as heirs to the lands that they had occupied as it was of absorbing Christians into Islam. With such a goal in mind, a cult that incorporated Khizir, the "Green Man" who appears in Sura 18 of the

[60] S. Redford, "The Seljuks of Rūm and the Antique," *Muqarnas*, X (1993), pp. 148-56; idem. "City Building in Seljuq Rum," in C. Lange and S. Mecit, eds., *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 256-76, esp. pp. 268-69.

Qur'ān, the Israelite prophet Elijah or Ilyās, and the two Christian martyrs St George and St Theodore who were venerated as mounted warriors, seems to have been of great significance. Not only were these figures revered at the same shrines, they were combined to such an extent that Khizir and Ilyas in particular formed a composite named Hıdrellez.

Travelers in Anatolia wrote of dervishes who inhabited a tekke near Çorum that had once been a church but had become a shrine dedicated to Elwan Chelebī, the grandson of Bābā Ilyās-i Khurāsānī.[61] At the tekke, Khizir-Ilyās was evidently venerated as St George. Indeed, the famous hagiography composed by Elwan Chelebī describes Khizir intervening during the Babai Revolt to preserve the lineage of Bābā Ilyās and therefore of Elwan Chelebī himself. Furthermore, Khizir-Ilyās was believed to be a companion of Alexander the Great. Like the walls of Konya and many other buildings erected during these years, the shrine and the legends that were associated with its heroes reveal a composite of old and new. Visitations by Khizir seem to have occurred at convenient moments to ensure the continuity of such shrines despite the upheavals of relentless war and migration, a process that Frederick William Hasluck, one of the first scholars to explore the subject, described in terms both accurate and concise when he remarked that "the functions and conceptions of Khidr are at once so varied and so vague as to adapt him to replace almost any saint, or indeed to occupy any site independently."[62] Furthermore, his sudden appearances made it "specially easy to associate him with any spot already hallowed by previous tradition or notable for recent supernatural occurrences."[63]

The possibility that has therefore intrigued or even tantalized modern scholars is whether such cults represented a hybrid whose different constituents were believed to be of more or less equal value or significance: neither Islam nor Christianity, in other words, but something new.[64] The

[61] S. E. Wolper, "Khiḍr, Elwan Çelebi and the Conversion of Sacred Sanctuaries in Anatolia," *The Muslim World*, XC (2000), pp. 309-22; idem, "Khiḍr and the Changing Frontiers of the Medieval World," *Medieval Encounters*, XVII (2011), pp. 120-46.

[62] F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), pp. 329-31.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Despite several decades of intense academic debate about hybridity, especially in the context of postcolonial and subaltern studies, the role of hybrids in Anatolia after the Turkish incursions is often presented as if the meaning of the term were patently obvious. Given the complex and occasionally elusive nature of the process to which it has been applied, more than a passing reference to this debate might be helpful. Two notable exceptions are Yorgos Dedes, whose comments on pages 34-35 in the first volume of his edition of the

existence of the hybrid cults cannot be denied, but what was their purpose, and where were they intended to lead, if indeed we can tell? Furthermore, how widespread were they? For example, if some dervishes were participants in cults of this sort, should we assume that all dervishes were exponents of a hybrid religiosity, including dervishes such as Rūmī who taught in the *madrasa*s of Konya?

The problem is not so much that we do not know the answers to these questions, but that a large number of books and articles have been written in the apparent belief that we do know the answers, that we have identified the essential characteristics of the time and place and can interpret any evidence as a confirmation of what we know about these characteristics. Even if we had, however, there would still be more to consider.

While hybrid cults such as that of Khizir, Elijah, and St George undoubtedly did emerge in Anatolia, and while a large number of shrines throughout Anatolia seem to have been patronized by both Muslims and Christians, we should not overlook the momentum created by the numbers of *madrasa*s that began to be built as soon as Muslims assumed control over any part of Anatolia.[65] They were among the first steps in refashioning life in the region along Muslim rather than Christian lines. It is noticeable, for example, that Pervāne Mu'īn al-Dīn Sulaymān is said to have established a *madrasa* at Sinope as soon as he had captured it in 1263 from the Komneni of Trabzon.[66] Not only did these institutions promote the spread of Islam by teaching Islamic law, they were also supported by foundations known as *waqf* that played a critical role in transferring wealth from Christians and from Christian institutions to Muslims. Christians, in effect, were paying for their own conversion.[67] Furthermore, there is evidence that these foundations offered money to those who converted. Christians were not the only targets of such largesse, however. Jews and

Battalname, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1996) are far more valuable than their brevity might suggest, and Kathryn Babayan, who appeals to Russian semioticians and others in the preface to her *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), esp. pp. xix-xxiii, a book that naturally includes Anatolia in its account of the emergence of the Safavid dynasty.

[65] G. Leiser, "The Madrasah and the Islamization of Anatolia before the Ottomans," in J. E. Lowry, D. J. Stewart, and S. M. Toorawa, eds., *Law and Education in Medieval Islam: Studies in Memory of Professor George Makdisi* (Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2004), pp. 176-82.

[66] Ibid., esp. p. 187.

[67] S. Vryonis, "Nomadization and Islamization in Asia Minor," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XXIX (1975), pp. 41-71, esp. pp. 60-61.

Zoroastrians—or perhaps Turks, it has been suggested, who had followed the more heterodox Islam of the *babas*[68]—were also being encouraged to convert to a scriptural form of Islam.

While it is often assumed that the version of Islam taught at *madrasa*s was in marked contrast to Sufism, and indeed Aflākī devotes a number of passages to describing the superiority of Rūmī as a spiritual master, it is nevertheless noticeable that he depicts both *'ulamā* and Sufis as teaching and living in the same institution.[69] In particular, Rūmī himself is portrayed as a *mudarris* who offers instruction within a *madrasa*.[70] When new *madrasa*s are opened, Aflākī reports that prominent Sufis as well as *'ulamā* were among the invited guests.[71] The idea that such institutions were established to promote a hybrid religion formed from Christianity and Islam seems implausible. Wherever they were built, and whatever architectural traditions they incorporated, these institutions were intended to teach the orthodox Islam of the Hanafi *madhhab*.

In any case, the question of hybrid cults cannot be discussed as if it were part of a simple encounter between Christians and Muslims, but never between Muslims and Muslims. As the eventual triumph of Islam in Anatolia was in large measure due to the arrival from Iran of the educated elite who created a sophisticated urban Islamic society in cities such as Konya, it would be misleading to talk about Islamization without stipulating the kinds of Islam that might be involved. In other words, was the process of Islamization uniform? Quite the opposite, it seems. Divisions between urban orthodoxy and rural heterodoxy, although not as precise as such terms might suggest, continued for centuries. They would preoccupy Ottoman sultans and would lead directly to the foundation of the Safavid dynasty in Iran, the enemy *par excellence* of the Ottoman state.[72] Indeed, as Ahmet Yaşar Ocak and others have observed, they survived

[68] Leiser, "The Madrasah and the Islamization of Anatolia before the Ottomans," esp. p. 190.

[69] Ibid., esp. p. 183.

[70] Ibid., esp. pp. 184-85.

[71] Ibid., esp. pp. 185-86.

[72] The relationship between rural heterodox Sufism in Anatolia and the emergence of the Safavid dynasty is described by A. Y. Ocak in several chapters of *Türkiye'de Tarihin Saptırılması Sürecinde Türk Sûfîliğine Bakışlar*, which is available in English as *Deviant Histories: New Perspectives on Turkish Sufism*. A more recent and even more stimulating account of the Safavids and their connections with dissident Sufism in Anatolia is provided by K. Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran*.

into the twenty-first century and remain a very real political problem in the Turkish Republic.[73]

The Path of Muḥammad

With all this in mind, it might be helpful to take a more critical view of a number of traditions about Rūmī and the Christians among whom he would have lived that appear in the famous collection by Frederick William Hasluck.[74] However fascinating these traditions are, as I have tried to explain elsewhere, I am not sure that the interpretation that Hasluck placed upon them is convincing.[75]

It should be stated at the outset that Rūmī does not appear to have lived in isolation as a Muslim among other members of a purely Muslim elite. Aflākī refers to several members of his family by Greek names. Maleka Khātūn, his daughter, was better known as Afendī-būla, "the daughter of the Master." The name of one of his two wives, Kerrā Khātūn, would seem to be Greek, while his grandson, Chalabī Jalāl al-Dīn 'Amīr 'Āref, had a daughter named Maleka Khātūn who was frequently known as Dhīsbīnā. Although the wife of Sulṭān Valad, the son who played an essential role in founding the Mevlevi order, was named Faṭēmā Khātūn, she was also known as Kerākā Khātūn. Nevertheless, it would be more difficult to know how much these names would allow us to assume about Rūmī's attitudes in general. In particular, his statements elsewhere suggest that his views of Christians were not formed on the basis of direct involvement with Christian communities in Konya but were derived from material that he encountered in earlier written sources. This would certainly seem to be the case with his discussions of the relationship between Christians and Jews.[76]

Aflākī refers to visits that Rūmī made to the "monastery of Plato," as the Monastery of St Charitōn north of Konya was often called. The abbot was greatly impressed with him, swearing that everything that he had read about the Messiah, everything that he had read in the books of Abraham

[73] The question has been discussed at length by Ocak in *Türkiye'de Tarihin Saptırılması Sürecinde Türk Sûfîliğine Bakışlar* in connection with Alevi and Bektashi communities. The more recent analysis by Dressler in *Writing Religion* is no less helpful.

[74] F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, pp. 372-76.

[75] Grierson, "'We Believe in Your Prophet,'" esp. pp. 102-4.

[76] See J. Renard, *All the King's Falcons: Rumi on Prophets and Revelation* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 94-95.

and Moses, and everything that he had read about the prophets was true of Rūmī as well. Aflākī also reports that Rūmī had spent forty days in meditation at the monastery, and that he made a dramatic demonstration of the superiority of Islam when asked about it. He wrapped a cloak belonging to a monk in his own cloak and placed them both in an oven. When he removed them, the former was scorched and charred but the latter was not, a miracle that convinced the monk to become his disciple. In a third episode, one of Rūmī's sons miraculously escaped death when he fell from cliffs near the monastery of St Charitōn. He was saved by an old man who was later identified from an icon as the saint himself. The miracle was commemorated by a gift of oil sent every year by successive Mevlevi shaykhs, who would also spend a night praying in a mosque built within the monastery walls. A fourth tradition concerned the tomb of Rūmī in Konya, where Rūmī himself was said to have requested that a Christian friend be buried next to him. According to Armenians, he was an Armenian bishop. According to Greeks, he was the abbot of St Charitōn. According to the Mevlevi, he was a monk whom Rūmī had converted to Islam. In a fifth tradition, a Christian taken prisoner at the battle of Nikopolis in 1396 referred to the tomb of Shams-i Tabrīzī in Konya, claiming that Shams had secretly been baptized. When his death approached, he received the Christian sacrament from an Armenian priest who had hidden it in an apple.

However fascinating and however valuable these traditions might be, I have argued elsewhere that I do not believe that they show a willingness on the part of Seljuk sultans, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, or the Mevlevi in general, to regard Christianity and Islam as somehow equivalent, as equally valid paths to salvation.[77] For that matter, the Christian legend concerning the secret conversion of Shams-i Tabrīzī would not suggest that Christians believed this either.

Aflākī also provides an intriguing account of Rūmī and his mission, in which he speaks of mystical hierarchies and alchemical transformations rather than what we might assume now to be more conventional pieties about submission to God and his Prophet.[78] The words are attributed to Rūmī himself, and they describe the Primary Cause leading him from Khurasan to the country of Rum, a pure land whose inhabitants were nevertheless ignorant of the love of God and the interior path to ecstasy. Rūmī and his descendants were therefore brought to Rum to scatter gifts from their elixir upon the copper of its people, thereby transforming them

[77] Grierson, "'We Believe in Your Prophet'", esp. pp. 103-4.

[78] Aflākī, *The Feats of the Knowers of God*, trans. J. O'Kane, §3.117.

into the philosopher's stone. The mission to which he had been called, Rūmī tells his listeners, involved establishing "a good religious path."

Rūmī not infrequently wrote in terms that suggest alchemical transformation,[79] and he evidently saw no contradiction between explaining his mission in such a way and proclaiming his obedience to the Prophet and the Qur'ān. In a famous passage in the *Divan-e Shams*, he describes himself as a slave of the Qur'ān, as dust on the path of Muhammad, the Chosen One. Furthermore, he issues a warning that if anyone were to attribute any statement other than this to him, his response would be one of disgust.[80]

While the cosmologies that Rūmī and indeed other Sufi poets employed had been formed through centuries of speculation based upon the intellectual legacy of earlier societies,[81] we should not assume that this made him any more likely to tolerate a challenge to what he saw as the perfection of Islam, especially from Christianity. If there seems to be any doubt about this, I would draw attention to an episode described in the second book of *Fīhi mā fīh*.[82] A Christian informs Rūmī that he has heard disciples of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī who are convinced of the divinity of Jesus. They believe him to be God just as Christians claim, but disguise their belief and even deny it in public so that they will not offend other Muslims. Rūmī repudiates this in the strongest terms, claiming that "these are the words of those drunk with the wine of Satan." He then goes on to denounce the central claim of Christian doctrine, comparing it to fool's gold, to a paralyzed hand, and to salt water rather than sweet, insisting that no one with any intelligence would accept such nonsense.

[79] For brief but nevertheless valuable discussions of the point in the wider context of Iranian mysticism, see K. Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, pp. 53-54 and 95. The question of alchemy in particular is discussed by W. Chittick in a number of passages in *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1983), including pp. 11, 71, and 189, and by A. Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rumi*, 2nd ed. (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993), notably on pp. 73-75. The second chapter of J. C. Bürgel, *The Feather of Simurgh: The "Licit Magic" of the Arts in Medieval Islam* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1988), pp. 27-52 is both fascinating and relevant.

[80] Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *The Quatrains of Rumi: Rubā'īyāt-é Jalāluddīn Muḥammad Balkhī Rūmī*, trans. I. Gamard and R. Farhadi (San Rafael, Calif.: Sufi Dari Books, 2008), pp. 2-3.

[81] As a general account of the cosmology within which Rūmī understood spiritual transformation to occur, several pages by W. Chittick entitled "The Descent and Reascent of the Spirit" are essential reading. See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*, pp. 72-82.

[82] Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Kitāb-i Fīhi mā fīh, az guftār-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, mashhūr bi Mawlāwī*, ed. Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfār (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1330/1951), pp. 125-26.

Even if we made no attempt to compare the incidents adduced by Hasluck with statements of this sort that have been attributed to Rūmī himself, they would not really justify the enthusiastic conclusions that Hasluck made when he assembled them. They do not show, as he alleged, that a philosophical rapprochement had been reached between Christianity and Islam in Konya, or that Rūmī was, in Hasluck's phrase, "at least half converted to Christianity."[83] On the contrary, some of them are keen to emphasize the importance of conversion to Islam and the ability of Rūmī to encourage or even provoke such conversion. Indeed, the *Manāqeb al-'āreftn* includes other passages in which the conversion of infidels is depicted as highly desirable.[84] While Rūmī was sitting in his *madrasa*, we are told, a group of Jews and Christians approached him.[85] They were rabbis and monks, and they bowed their heads in respect before asking him about the demands placed upon Muslims by the Qur'ān and by Islamic law. They wanted to understand the reasons why such requirements had been imposed. The explanation that Rūmī offered was so impressive that with one accord they apparently embraced Islam and cut the belts that they had been required to wear as tokens of their inferior status as infidels. Aflākī adds that Rūmī was responsible for eighteen thousand infidels finding Islam and becoming disciples. Furthermore, he reminds his readers, they are still becoming disciples.

Nevertheless, this is not what one might call the whole picture. Even if Rūmī or those who compiled the accounts saw conversion as an ideal, it may not have been a fundamental requirement at the outset. It seems that one could have been a follower of Rūmī and still have been a Christian monk, for example, and this is an intriguing possibility. No less intriguing—although it is important to remember that these are accounts written by Muslims and not by Christians—at least some Christians may not have believed that Christian identity was sacrificed or diluted to an unacceptable degree if one chose to follow a Muslim holy man. This, of course, was Hasluck's general thesis: that divisions between Christianity and Islam were by no means as sharp as they have conventionally been

[83] Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, p. 374.

[84] The importance of conversion as a theme in the *Manāqib al-'ārifīn* is stressed by John Dechant in an excellent article entitled "Depictions of the Islamization of the Mongols in the *Manāqib al-'ārifīn* and the Foundation of the Mawlawī Community," *Mawlana Rumi Review*, II (2011), pp. 135-64. Inter alia, Dechant observes that Aflākī appears more concerned with the conversion of Mongols than Christians, and is even interested in the conversion of sea creatures and a river monster.

[85] Aflākī, *The Feats of the Knowers of God*, trans. J. O'Kane, §3.600.

understood to be. Even if, on occasion, he pushed the evidence to say more than it does, his basic claim may be reasonable enough.

The Georgian Lady

It is important to acknowledge, however, that we may often be doing little more than seeing through a glass darkly. One of the most tantalizing examples of the problem concerns Gorjī Khātūn, the "Georgian Lady" whom Aflākī describes as a prominent disciple of Rūmī. She was the Georgian princess Tamar, whom I have mentioned above as the daughter of the Georgian queen Rusudan and the Seljuk prince Mughīth al-Dīn Tughrilshāh. Tamar herself married the Seljuk sultan Gīyāth al-Dīn Kay Khusraw II, the son of 'Alā al-Dīn Kay Qubād I. In time, she would become the mother of 'Alā al-Dīn Kay Qubād II.

While Tamar made her way to her marriage at Kayseri, she was accompanied by a Georgian *catholicos* and a retinue of Georgian aristocrats who received large grants of land from the sultan as a way of cementing the alliance of the two states. Her husband would reign for nine years, during which the circumstances of Seljuk rule would change dramatically with the Babai Revolt of 1240 and the victory of the Mongols at Köse Dağ in 1243. After he died, Tamar would marry Mu'īn al-Dīn Sulaymān, known as Pervāne, who served as Mongol governor until he was executed in 1277.

Although Aflākī presents her as devoted to Rūmī, it is not clear if Tamar was still Christian. Aflākī does not describe her conversion, but he nevertheless refers to her in terms that suggest her being Muslim.[86] Even though the *Georgian Chronicle* states that her remaining Christian had been one of the conditions of the marriage, it also maintains that she was eventually converted by force.[87] The event apparently occurred after her mother intrigued against a cousin who had become joint ruler in Georgia with her own son, and sowed doubt in the sultan's mind about her

[86] At no point in the *Manāqeb al-'ārefīn* does Aflākī actually state that Tamar is Muslim or even refer to her by a Muslim name. She is simply called "the Georgian Lady" and awarded epithets such as "Queen of Queens," "Queen of the World," or "Queen of the Age." In such circumstances, the suggestion by Andrew Peacock in a generally impressive article that the evidence of Aflākī for her conversion is "persuasive" may itself seem less than persuasive. See "Georgia and the Anatolian Turks in the 12th and 13th Centuries," *Anatolian Studies*, LVI (2006), pp. 127-46, esp. 141-42.

[87] Simon Qauxč'išvili, ed., *K'art'lis C'xovreba*, 4 vols. (Tbilisi: Sabc̆ot'a sak'art'velo, 1955-73), vol. 2, p. 200.

daughter's fidelity. The cousin was apparently thrown into a pit filled with snakes, although he is said to have survived the ordeal, and Tamar was converted to Islam against her will. The Seljuk chronicler Ibn Bībī differs from the *Georgian Chronicle* and refers to Tamar as "Queen of Islam" even before her marriage, at a time when she would have been neither queen nor Muslim.[88] The Syrian Orthodox chronicler Abū al-Faraj certainly believed that she did convert to Islam, but includes no information about how this occurred and is clearly confused about other details of her life.[89] Some of the sources would therefore seem to be mistaken, but modern scholars continue to disagree about which they might be.

It has been suggested that evidence of Tamar remaining Christian can be seen in her providing funds to build churches,[90] but this would not seem definitive. Tamar was a princess in her own right, the wife of a sultan, the mother of a sultan, and the wife of the Mongol governor at a time when the Mongols were in control of Anatolia and before any of the Ilkhans had converted to Islam. If she endowed churches as well as the tomb in which Rūmī is still venerated, would patronage of both Christian and Muslim holy sites have been more likely if she were Muslim or if she were Christian? It is worth recalling that her mother-in-law is known to have remained Christian and nevertheless to have commissioned some of the most important Seljuk *madrasas*.[91]

It has also been suggested that Tamar would not have become a Sufi and a follower of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī if she had been converted to Islam under duress, and therefore must have become Muslim willingly.[92] This argument too seems less than convincing. It might have been all the more likely that after a conversion imposed for political reasons she would have been attracted to a teacher such as Rūmī.

What may be interesting in the present context is that even if she did convert to Islam, her style of devotion seems to have remained

[88] Ibn Bībī, *El-Evāmirü'l-'Alā'iyye fī'l-Umūri'l-'Alāiyye*, ed. A. S. Erzi, p. 484.

[89] Abū al-Faraj (Bar Hebraeus), *Gregorii Barhebraei chronicum syriacum*, ed. P. Bedjan, p. 471.

[90] S. Vryonis, "Another Note on the Inscription of the Church of St. George at Beliserama," *Byzantina*, IX (1977), pp. 11-22, esp. pp. 18-19.

[91] A. Eastmond, "Gender and Patronage between Christianity and Islam in the Thirteenth Century," in A. Ödekan, E. Akyürek, and N. Necipoğlu, eds., *Change in the Byzantine World in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, 1. Uluslararası Sevgi Gönül Bizans Araştırmaları Sempozyumu/First International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium (Istanbul: Sadberk Hanım Müzesi, 2010), pp. 78-88.

[92] Peacock, "Georgia and the Anatolian Turks in the 12th and 13th Centuries," *Anatolian Studies*, LVI (2006), esp. p. 141.

characteristically Christian, at least in one sense, and Aflākī does not suggest that anyone was sufficiently disturbed by this to denounce it. One of the more intriguing passages in the *Manāqeb al-'ārefīn* concerns Tamar planning to go to Kayseri, a journey that was evidently necessary for affairs of state.[93] Although Aflākī explains that the sultan required her advice and counsel, she was nevertheless distressed at the thought of being separated from Rūmī.

Fortunately, a solution seemed to be at hand. As one of Rūmī's disciples was a painter who evidently possessed a remarkable skill at portraiture, Tamar instructed him to produce a portrait of Rūmī on a sheet of paper. The portrait, she hoped, would serve to console her while she was traveling. When the artist and a number of officials approached Rūmī to tell him of her commission, he agreed to the request that a portrait be made, although he added an enigmatic qualification: "if you can."[94]

The artist therefore took his pen in hand and began to draw on a sheet of paper. Although the portrait was undoubtedly very beautiful, when the artist looked at Rūmī again, he seemed to be different than he had appeared at first. The artist therefore drew another portrait. Again, Rūmī seemed to change. The artist eventually drew portraits on twenty sheets of paper, but whenever he looked at Rūmī, the likeness was never exact. In his bewilderment, the artist cried out and then fainted. He broke his pens, and finally prostrated himself before Rūmī, who began to recite a *ghazal* in which he described himself as being both fixed and moving, of being without color, and unable to see himself as he is.[95] The artist departed in tears. When the sheets of paper were brought to Tamar, however, she placed them in a trunk and kept them with her even if she were not traveling. Whenever she felt in need of consolation from Rūmī, she would gaze at them.

For Aflākī, the point of the story lies in the extraordinary and miraculous nature of Rūmī. With the question of conversion in mind, it is interesting not only that Gorjī Khātūn has in effect commissioned an icon, or rather a series of icons, but also that she treats the portraits of Rūmī as if they were icons without provoking any adverse comment. Either she had remained Christian, or she had retained after her conversion a form of devotion regarded as characteristic of the Georgian and other Orthodox Churches.

[93] Aflākī, *The Feats of the Knowers of God*, trans. J. O'Kane, §3.373.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, "I am am I: A *Ghazal* from Rumi's *Divan-i Shams-i Tabrizi*," trans. P. Losensky, *Mawlana Rumi Review*, II (2011), pp. 165-66.

Orientalists, Islamists, and Nationalists

There is, of course, another way of posing the question of the relationship between Rūmī and Christianity. Regardless of the attitudes of Rūmī himself or of his immediate followers, and regardless of the more obvious ties that existed between Christians and Sufi orders that emerged from the Turkmen *babas*,[96] Rūmī was an exponent of a tradition that had been influenced by Christianity and indeed by other earlier religious systems as well.[97] In fact, this is true of Islam as a whole, just as it is true of Christianity and indeed of Judaism.[98] None of these religions arose in a vacuum, even if they all claim to possess an exclusive or at least superior version of the truth. Nevertheless, historians of Sufism have often regarded such statements as an attempt to denigrate one of the greatest achievements of Islamic civilization by denying it any claim to originality. In some cases, the statements may have been precisely that, although they have been made for a number of reasons and by scholars with very different intentions.

Foreign connoisseurs enamored with the symbolism of Persian Sufi poetry were often convinced that descriptions of wine, taverns, ecstatic dancing, beautiful girls, or beautiful boys were too seductive to be truly or essentially Islamic.[99] Although this has been seen as indicative of myopia

[96] The relationship is discussed by Wolper in several sections of her excellent *Cities and Saints: Sufism and the Transformation of Urban Space in Medieval Anatolia*. Pages 1-13 and 78-81 are of particular interest.

[97] It is certainly possible to write an excellent history of the emergence of Sufism that contains little or no reference to Christianity. Two examples are M. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996) and A. T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007). Nevertheless, the absence of any discussion of Syrian Christian mysticism in particular suggests that a more comprehensive history remains a desideratum. Karamustafa himself refers to this task on pages ix-x of his preface, in which he laments the difficulty of working with secondary literature that is thin and conjectural.

[98] An important statement of the often unacknowledged debt that Christian mysticism owes to Jewish mysticism is provided by A. Golitzin, "Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men: The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Niketas Stethatos, and the Tradition of 'Interiorized Apocalyptic' in Eastern Christian Ascetical and Mystical Literature," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, LV (2001), pp. 125-53.

[99] See, for example, C. W. Ernst, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Shambala, 2011), pp. 8-18. Another example, albeit from a different perspective, can be seen in S. H. Nasr, "The Qur'ān as the Foundation of Islamic Spirituality," in S. H. Nasr, ed., *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), pp. 3-10, esp. p. 8 and p. 10 n. 12.

and prejudice, it is not necessarily so.[100] It obviously depends on what one means by "Islamic," and it has been generally acknowledged for some time that "Islamic art," for example, or "Islamic philosophy" may have been produced inside the "Islamic world" but cannot be described without confusion as "Islamic." Attempts have therefore been made to redefine or reinvent more precise terms in English as well as in Turkish and other languages.[101]

Furthermore, conservative Muslim scholars have often made an almost identical claim, hoping that by declaring Sufism or some forms of Sufism to be "un-Islamic" they could enforce their own views of the religion.[102] Indeed, such claims are hardly new. Aflākī reports that complaints were made about the propriety or legality of music and dancing during the *sema* while Rūmī was still alive,[103] and these continued to be made in later centuries by Ottoman as well as by Iranian clerics.[104]

On the other hand, nationalist and secularist historians in Turkey have been more than willing to suggest influences that they claimed were not Islamic, citing shamanism from Central Asia or the early cults of Anatolia as foundations of a uniquely Turkish form of Sufism during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods.[105] Christianity was a far less appealing source, however, not so much because it was seen as a threat to Islamic identity but because

[100] For a concise account of the appropriation by mystics of a secular tradition of poetry about love, see J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry: An Introduction to the Mystical Use of Classical Persian Poetry* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997), esp. pp. 63-71.

[101] A brief discussion of such attempts by Ocak and others is provided in my Introduction to *Deviant Histories: New Perspectives on Turkish Sufism*, pp. xiii-xxvii, esp. pp. xxiii-xxv.

[102] C. W. Ernst, "Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: Problematizing the Teaching of Sufism," in B. Wheeler, ed., *Teaching Islam* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 108-23, esp. pp. 112-16.

[103] Aflākī, *The Feats of the Knowers of God*, trans. J. O'Kane, §3.546.

[104] For the former, see M. C. Zilfi, "The Kadizelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XLV (1986), pp. 251-69. For the latter, see Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, pp. 449-52.

[105] The most influential of the Turkish historians who advocated shamanism as having a formative impact on Sufism among the Turks of Central Asia and Anatolia was Mehmed Fuad Köprülü. See in particular his *Influence du chamanisme turco-mongol sur les ordres mystiques musulmans*, a slim volume published at Istanbul in 1929, which I have translated into English and prepared for publication along with an introduction and English versions of several related articles as *Mehmed Fuad Köprülü and the Shamanist Legacy in Turkish Sufism*. One of the problems with such enthusiasm was that very little was known about shamanism at the time, and some of the most important publications were only accessible to scholars with an ability to read Hungarian and Russian.

it was seen as a threat to Turkish identity, a legacy of an earlier culture in Anatolia that belonged to alien peoples such as Greeks and Armenians.[106]

In the case of Rūmī, the question of such influence seems to have been exacerbated by later developments within Mevlevi tradition, especially by commentaries that were written to explain the *Mathnawī* and relied upon the terminology of Ibn al-'Arabī to do so. As Ibn al-'Arabī lived for some time within the Seljuk sultanate of Rum, and as his stepson and foremost exponent Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī lived in Konya itself, the question has arisen of whether Rūmī depended in any way upon the teachings of Ibn al-'Arabī. Attempts to answer it have become entangled not only with the wider issue of the impact that Neoplatonic philosophy received through Christian sources might have had upon Islamic thought in general, but also with the attitudes of modern Western scholars who have studied Rūmī and indeed other Sufi poets from the perspective of a supposedly alien culture, and of later critics who for various reasons are inclined to regard such scholarship with even greater suspicion than it might warrant.

Several points should be remembered, I think. The first is that Rūmī created a vast corpus of what is, for the most part, ecstatic poetry. Even though he had been a *mudarris*, the collections of verse upon which his reputation rests do not constitute a systematic account of the mystical path. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to extract a systematic account from them. It is by no means certain, at least to me, that this should even be attempted. If one did attempt to understand them in a systematic way, it would hardly be surprising if one turned to the great intellectual synthesis of Ibn al-'Arabī as it was expounded in Konya by Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī.[107] Even though there seems to be little or no evidence in the writings of Rūmī that he did base his teachings upon those of Ibn al-'Arabī,[108] when

[106] For nationalist historians in Turkey, Christianity was less desirable as an explanation not only because it was associated with several ethnic minorities in Anatolia, as well as with the Great Powers to the west, but also because very few of them had much knowledge of it. They had been interested in tasks other than mastering Greek, Armenian, Syriac, or Georgian, or following the intricacies of Christian theology or spirituality. Even the publications of more recent experts such as Ahmet Yaşar Ocak display little interest in these subjects.

[107] For a recent account of the life and writings of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, see E. Demirli, *Nazarî Tasavvufun Kurucusu Sadreddin Konevî: Hayatı, Eserleri, Düşünceleri* (Istanbul: İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi Yayınları, 2008). Among the most helpful and concise accounts in English of the contribution made by Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī are those of William Chittick, including his introduction to *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. ix-xxii, esp. pp. xvii-xviii and "Ibn 'Arabī and His School," in S. H. Nasr, ed., *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 49-79.

[108] A concise account of the question is provided by W. Chittick, "Rūmī and the Mawlawiyyah," in S. H. Nasr, ed., *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, pp. 105-26, esp. pp. 113-17.

the most influential of the Ottoman commentators, Ismā'īl Anqarawī, set out to explicate Rūmī, it was upon this synthesis that he relied.[109] And in the twentieth century, when Reynold Nicholson compiled the commentary that accompanied his critical edition and translation, it was upon Anqarawī, and therefore ultimately upon Ibn al-'Arabī, that he relied.[110]

Does this mean that Nicholson is part of a conspiracy intent upon proving that Rūmī and indeed Sufis in general are simply derivative and therefore not to be taken seriously, or at least not as seriously as Christian mystics? There are deficiencies in the work of any scholar, of course. In the case of Nicholson, however, I do not see these as the result of a narrow or arrogant preference for Neoplatonic philosophy implanted in an impressionable young mind while he was learning Latin and Greek as a schoolboy.[111] The problem—if it is a problem—is not that Nicholson himself imposed a Neoplatonic framework upon the *Mathnawī*, but that he relied upon a Muslim commentator who had applied to the *Mathnawī* the teachings of one of the greatest Muslim mystics. If Nicholson had indeed erred, it would be due to his having relied upon these Muslim witnesses to the spiritual path. Furthermore, I do not believe that any use of

[109] İsmail Rusuhi Ankaravi, *Mecmûatü'l-Letâif ve Mamûratü'l-Maârif* (Istanbul: Amire, 1872). For a general account of the life and writings of Ismā'īl Anqarawī, see E. Yetik, *İsmail-i Ankaravî: Hayatı, Eserleri ve Tasavvufî Görüşleri* (Istanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 1992). Perhaps the most impressive recent discussions of Anqarawī are those of Bilal Kuşpınar, including a series of articles that are being published in the *Mawlana Rumi Review*. The first of these appeared earlier in 2012: "*Simāṭ al-mūqinīn (Spiritual Food for the People of Certainty)*: Ismā'īl Anqarawī's Arabic Commentary on the Introduction to the *Mathnawī*," *Mawlana Rumi Review*, III (2012), pp. 51-67.

[110] R. A. Nicholson, ed., *The Mathnawí of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí*, 8 vols. (London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1925-40). The commentary was published in volumes 7 and 8.

[111] An uncompromising statement of the position appears in Victoria Rowe Holbrook, *The Unreadable Shores of Love: Turkish Modernity and Mystic Romance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), p. 18. Although the book is in many ways a tour de force, the passage about the impact of Neoplatonic philosophy on R. A. Nicholson and A. J. Arberry as a result of "a British schoolboy's curriculum" is difficult to follow. The curriculum of British schoolboys when Nicholson or Arberry were educated was most unlikely to include Neoplatonic philosophers. Not only did the Greek in which such philosophers wrote tend to be obscure, the texts were also late and often of Oriental origin. They would therefore have been thought unsuitable for schoolboys even if they had been comprehensible. Furthermore, while Nicholson's commentary on the *Mathnawī*, for example, does display an interest in Neoplatonic philosophy, it would seem to be due to his reliance on the commentary of Anqarawī. In other words, he was following a Muslim exemplar. Holbrook herself refers to Anqarawī at the top of page 18 as Nicholson's "primary source." Above all, her comments depend on a juxtaposition of "Greek" and "the East" that seems simplistic and inaccurate, especially when applied to later forms of Platonism.

Neoplatonism would have made either of these voices any less Muslim. This would seem to define "Muslim" or indeed "Islam" in far too narrow a way, even allowing for the obvious elasticity of the terms. It would also involve a condescending attitude to generations of Muslim scholars and their patrons, whose appropriation of earlier philosophical or scientific achievements should not be taken as proof that they were merely passive victims of Christian cultural superiority.

A Distorting Mirror

Criticism of Western studies of Islam in general became noticeably more strident after Edward Said published a famous diatribe against Orientalism in which he set a pattern for dismissing Western scholarship as invariably tendentious and mendacious, as an academic version of colonial domination, or at least as an accessory to such domination.[112] Whatever the validity of these claims—and they have been applied far beyond Said's original dissection of French, English, and American Arabists—it might be helpful to consider briefly if any of them are applicable to studies of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī or other Sufis in Anatolia.

A revealing demonstration of Said's approach to the study of Sufism—the *locus classicus*, as it were—is his description of Louis Massignon and his fascination with Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj.[113] While Said clearly regarded Massignon as brilliant, and as a figure of immense cultural importance, he nevertheless saw him as having promoted Ḥallāj above the Muslim society that nourished and sustained him and as having assigned a disproportionate influence to him. He saw Massignon's treatment of Ḥallāj as offering a way in which a European scholar could explain the significance of a Muslim cultural hero and use him to escape the strictures of Muslim orthodoxy. In other words, Massignon wanted to invent a hero within Islamic mysticism who was in effect not Muslim but Christian.

The most obvious differences between Rūmī and Ḥallāj, at least in terms of Said's critique, are the result of Rūmī not having been Arab. In other words, he has not been vulnerable to the ubiquitous anti-Semitic prejudice that Said was convinced had polluted the study of Arabs and of Arabic. Furthermore, even though British or French attitudes to the Ottoman Empire were undoubtedly complicated and extended from intrigue to actual invasion, and even though British and French forces

[112] E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

[113] Ibid., pp. 264-74.

occupied various parts of the former Ottoman Empire for considerable periods of time, the study of Rūmī or of the Mevlevi does not seem to have been connected with an attempt by European imperialists to understand more completely and therefore subjugate more effectively a colonized society. The charges of promoting a Sufi above the Muslim culture that nourished and sustained him, or of assigning a disproportionate influence to him, may also seem unjustified, even if they require a more considered answer. After all, Rūmī was the author of a book that has often been described as "the Qur'ān in Persian." His writings have been of immense importance, and the Mevlevi order that was founded to ensure the propagation of his teachings played a central role in the Ottoman state, in Ottoman society, and in Ottoman culture. His influence may therefore seem difficult to exaggerate. That being said, it is certainly possible to distort its significance by assuming that Mevlevi practice was normative for Ottoman Sufism in general. It is also possible, as we shall see, to assign an automatic or universal validity to his teachings without making any attempt to engage with the serious hermeneutical issues that this presents.[114]

Even if the specific criticisms that appear in Said's denunciation of Orientalism are not directly relevant to the study of Rūmī—partly because Said had different targets in mind and partly because the simplistic dichotomy that his argument assumes is of little use in describing the far more complicated relationship between European and both Ottoman and later Turkish scholarship[115]—there have undoubtedly been and continue to be a number of obstacles to a more accurate or more subtle understanding of Rūmī himself and of the Mevlevi. The first is a failure to understand the world in which Rūmī lived. In part, this is due to the number of languages

[114] In particular, Christian and Muslim assumptions about the nature of sanctity are often very different and cannot easily be transferred from one tradition to the other. For example, a number of helpful discussions of the term *walī* or "friend of God" have appeared in recent years, including B. Radtke and J. O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996), J. Renard, *Friends of God: Islamic Images of Piety, Commitment, and Servanthood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), and J. Mojaddedi, *Beyond Dogma: Rumi's Teachings on Friendship with God and Early Sufi Theories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[115] An excellent analysis of this question is provided by S. Bozdoğan and G. Necipoğlu, "Entangled Discourses: Scrutinizing Orientalist and Nationalist Legacies in the Architectural Historiography of the 'Lands of Rum,'" *Muqarnas*, XXIV (2007), pp. 1-6, esp. p. 3. The authors draw attention to the emergence among Ottoman scholars during the nineteenth century of a sophisticated "counter-narrative" directed against French and British Orientalist scholarship. The dialogue that ensued was far more complex than the account that Said provides in his criticism of French and British Arabists.

in which the sources appear, to their complexity, and to the fact that by no means all of them have been edited, published, or translated. It is also the result of a tendency to indulge in generalizations about Anatolian society before enough information is available. In particular, there is still a noticeable temptation to treat rhetoric as if it were reality, and a failure to take sufficient account of the conventions of different genres.[116] The result is little less than confusion, and it has been exacerbated by the assumption that modern states can be treated as the direct successors of medieval antecedents and that modern social or political ideals can be ascribed to the past. For example, Anatolia is seen as the domain of a Seljuk Turkish state that passed its mantel to an Ottoman state that in turn became the modern Turkish Republic. This can easily become a narrow and even strident view in which diversity and indeed ambiguity or confusion are all too easily lost.[117] In particular, the process by which Anatolia was not only Islamized but also to a large extent Iranized has often been ignored or distorted.[118]

Especially as we still know little about this milieu, the temptation to extract Rūmī from it, to treat him simply as a voice expounding eternal truths, has been difficult to resist. And once this is done, there is a further temptation to reduce the complexity of his message to whatever one assumes those eternal truths to be. At this point, further difficulties arise because such generalizations are often tendentious. In the West, there has too often been an attempt not to denigrate Rūmī by encasing him within a series of Orientalist clichés but to elevate him to the role of spiritual guide for the nations, a figure who can speak to anyone without requiring that they listen to him as a Muslim. In Turkey, there has too often been an attempt to treat Rūmī as a specifically Turkish cultural hero, as an embodiment of a Turkish identity who displays certain characteristics because they are essential to Turkish Sufism and indeed to Turkish culture in general, even before it became Muslim. The most obvious of these is tolerance, which at times has been presented as a "humanist" value in contrast to a narrow Muslim religiosity.[119] In other words, the Turkish version

[116] The comments by Carole Hillenbrand in *Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol: The Battle of Manzikert* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) help to elucidate this question. See page 185 in particular.

[117] As noted above, Sara Nur Yıldız provides an excellent account of the problem in "Reconceptualizing the Seljuk-Cilician Frontier: Armenians, Latins, and Turks in Conflict and Alliance during the Early Thirteenth Century," esp. pp. 91-94.

[118] See C. Hillenbrand, "Rāvandī, the Seljuk Court at Konya and the Persianisation of Anatolian Cities," *Mésogeios*, XXV-XXVI (2005), pp. 157-69.

[119] This approach has been adopted in a very large number of books and articles published in Turkish, especially in discussions of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Hājī Bektāsh Velī, and Yūnus

and the Western version display a similar or even identical virtue. Nevertheless, this would seem to be the result of imposing an ideal, of reading the evidence in terms of the ideal, and of assuming that the evidence therefore proves the veracity of the ideal, a process that could reasonably be described as circular. Even so, however, there has also been little attempt to consider what such a tolerance or toleration might actually have meant, and too many attempts to make it into whatever we think would be agreeable now. Furthermore, there has been a weakness for claiming that Anatolian Sufism is admirable because of its rich diversity, and then ignoring that diversity by claiming that Sufis in Anatolia expounded the same doctrine, notably *waḥdat al-wujūd*, regardless of whether they wrote in Persian, Arabic, or Turkish and regardless of whether they taught in the *madrasa*s of the great cities or lived among Turkmen tribes.[120]

In removing Rūmī from the circumstances of his life in Anatolia during the thirteenth century, there has also been a tendency to reduce him to a collection of literary texts. As if that were not a problem in itself, the editions employed have often been unreliable. Furthermore, there has been little embarrassment about extracting passages from his writings and reading them in isolation. One of the more egregious examples of the latter appears in a book by an historian whose work I have read with much profit and enjoyment. I have referred above to an anecdote concerning the disciples of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī. It is presented in the following way:

> Toujours au XIII[e] siècle, en Anatolie, Djelâleddîn Rûmi et son contemporain et ami, Sadreddîn de Konya, ont des contacts suivis avec les mystiques byzantins: ". . . *Certains disciples de*

Emre. Its most articulate exponent in English has been Talât Sait Halman in essays such as "The Turk in Rumi/Rumi in Turkey," which was first published in P. J. Chelkowski, ed., *The Scholar and the Saint: Studies in Commemoration of Abu'l-Rayhan al-Bīrūni and Jalal al-Din al-Rūmī* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 217-54, or "Yunus Emre's Humanism," which was first published in T. S. Halman, *The Humanist Poetry of Yunus Emre* (Istanbul: R.C.D. Cultural Institute, 1972), pp. 11-35. Whatever hermeneutical value it might be thought to possess, the term seems more than a little anachronistic when applied to Sufis in Anatolia during the thirteenth or fourteenth century. It has been dismissed as such by Ahmet Yaşar Ocak in *Türkiye'de Tarihin Saptırılması Sürecinde Türk Sûfîliğine Bakışlar*, which is available in English as *Deviant Histories: New Perspectives on Turkish Sufism*.

[120] An example of both tendencies can be seen in the essays by Ahmet Yaşar Ocak cited in the previous note. For an attempt to ensure that discussions of *waḥdat al-wujūd* are conducted with greater rigor, see W. Chittick, "Rūmī and *waḥdat al-wujūd*," in A. Banani, R. Hovannisian, and G. Sabagh, eds., *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rūmī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 70-111.

Sadreddîn", écrit Rûmi, ". . . *ont bu avec les chrétiens et ont reconnus la divinité de Jésus.*"[121]

As we have seen, however, Rūmī immediately condemns and dismisses such opinions as diseased, poisonous, and stupid.

Converts or Hybrids?

It may seem glib to speak of a carrot and a stick, and yet during the centuries in which an apparently more generous and more attractive vision of Islam was presented by Rūmī and by other Sufis in Anatolia, the structures of the imperial Church, now beyond the frontiers of the empire that had nourished it, were placed under increasing pressure. Funds were transferred from churches and monasteries to mosques, *madrasa*s, and tekkes, with Muslim institutions now assuming the role and providing the services that Christian institutions had been offering, thereby diverting the allegiance that Christian institutions had commanded.

While it would be cynical as well as misleading to suggest that religion is simply a matter of money and power, it is nevertheless true that access to both can, over time, prove decisive. As in Syria or Iraq or Egypt, eventually a Christian majority in Anatolia would become a Christian minority. Sufis of various sorts played a significant role in this, even though the instruction offered in *madrasa*s as well as in tekkes should not be ignored and too great a distinction should not be made between them. If the difference between Christianity and Islam seemed at times almost to vanish in the mystical vision that Aflākī ascribes to Rūmī and his successors, conversion thereby became much easier to contemplate. Aflākī describes a Greek builder who told disciples of Rūmī that he would not embrace Islam because he had followed the religion of Jesus for almost fifty years.[122] As he feared Jesus, he would be ashamed to abandon him. Rūmī apparently overheard his remarks, and pronounced fear to be the essence of faith. Even a Christian who feared God, he proclaimed, was not without religion. When he heard these words, however, the builder did not remain Christian. He became Muslim. Once he had done so, he also became a devoted disciple of Rūmī. At least as Aflākī describes the

[121] M. Balivet, "Richesse et limites du comparatisme en histoire des mystiques: quelques cas musulmans, chrétiens et juifs," in M. Balivet, *Byzantines et Ottomans: relations, interaction, succession* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 1999), pp. 199-203, esp. p. 201.

[122] Aflākī, *The Feats of the Knowers of God*, trans. J. O'Kane, §3.450.

encounter, the generosity of Rūmī led immediately and almost inexorably toward Islam.

As I have remarked above, however, it is far too easy for historians of the Byzantine Empire or the Oriental Churches to see relations between Christians and Muslims as the fundamental question in the transformation of Anatolia. It should be remembered that this was only part of a more lengthy and more complicated process. The nomadic tribes that had contributed to the Seljuk occupation of Anatolia but proved so troublesome to the consolidation of the Seljuk state eventually rebelled against their masters. Although they were crushed, they would continue to dream of rebellion, and their dreams would prove so durable that Ottoman sultans would eventually attempt to solve the problem that they posed by bestowing imperial patronage upon Sufi orders such as the Bektashi, in the hope that a more amenable version of the *baba*s who led their nomadic followers against the sultans would reduce the threat of insurrection along the eastern frontier. It did, of course, but only in part.

Much of the significance of these events was lost in the *Kulturkampfen* of later centuries, as Ottoman historians tried after the fact to create a respectably orthodox history for the dynasty.[123] Although they described the empire as emerging from a holy war against Christendom led by warriors for the faith, more recent scholarship has drawn attention to the role of Christian allies alongside Muslims.[124] The change in mission seems to have come after continuing insurrection in the east, especially with the establishment of the Safavid dynasty and the realization that dissident dervishes were looking to a foreign state rather than to their own sultan. The unrest was not confined to the east, however. The revolt in 1416 of Shaykh Bedreddin—a military judge (*qāḍī 'asker*) whose grandfather had been a disciple of Rūmī and who really did claim that Jesus and Muhammad were prophets of equivalent status—attracted

[123] A convenient summary of the reasons why this occurred and the process through which it occurred is provided by C. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 115-27. An earlier article by the same author should also be consulted: C. Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth," *Turcica*, XIX (1987), pp. 7-27. The article has been reprinted in C. Imber, *Studies in Ottoman History and Law* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 1996), pp. 305-22. From a large number of impressive publications by Halil İnalcık, the following article is of particular relevance: "How to Read 'Āshıḳ Pasha-zāde's History," in C. Heywood and C. Imber, eds., *Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Professor V. L. Ménage* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 1994), pp. 139-56. It has been reprinted in H. İnalcık, *Essays in Ottoman History* (Istanbul: Eren, 1998), pp. 31-50.

[124] Discussions of the question appear in a large number of secondary sources. One of the most helpful is H. W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. 45-54.

an enthusiastic following in the Balkans, where there was a substantial Christian population.[125] Similar unrest occurred in Anatolia, and it was not unprecedented. During the earlier reign of the Ottoman sultan Beyazit I, a sermon was delivered at Bursa, the first Ottoman capital, in which Jesus was presented as a prophet in no way inferior to Muhammad.[126] An Arab who was present and belonged to the ulama observed that this was hardly an orthodox presentation of Islam. The congregation, he soon realized, did not agree with him.

Nevertheless, it is always important to read the sources with care rather than enthusiasm. One of the most frequently cited passages from the *Velayetname*, the famous Bektashi hagiography, describes a monk who was in fact a Bektashi dervish.[127] Yet there is no attempt in this passage to present Christianity and Islam as equivalent. The monk is not depicted as equally and openly both Christian and Muslim. Furthermore, the passage is a comparison of true Islam and false Islam in which Christianity is largely irrelevant to the point that the dervish is attempting to make: an honest and generous Christian priest would be better than a mendacious dervish, even if the priest were by definition merely a Christian. Inasmuch as Christianity is relevant, it is relevant precisely because of its inferior status.

The question of hybrids may therefore be complicated by the role that Christianity, or at least an ideal Christianity, was assigned by critics of the Seljuk sultanate. In several cases, it has been described as a protest against the corrupt and worldly religion of the Seljuks and a step towards a true Islam.[128] The extravagant and antinomian dervish Barāq Bābā, who is said in some accounts to have been the son of the sultan 'Izz al-Dīn Kay Kawus and therefore a Seljuk prince,[129] apparently fled to Byzantium to escape the intrigues of the Seljuk court. He converted to Christianity and lived as a Christian, indeed as the adopted son of the patriarch of Constantinople, until he was converted back to Islam by the famous dervish Sarı Saltuk.

This may recall the role assigned to an esoteric Christianity by Sufis such as Lāhījī or Shabistarī, for whom the symbols of an idolatrous faith became symbols of perfection because they offered a way to escape a sat-

[125] The most complete account is M. Balivet, *Islam mystique et révolution armée dans les Balkans ottomans: vie du Cheikh Bedreddîn le "Hallâj des Turcs" (1358/59-1416)* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 1995).

[126] Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, p. 137.

[127] A. Gölpınarlı, ed., *Vilâyet-name: Manâkıb-ı Hünkâr Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli* (Istanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1958), p. 56. The passage is discussed by Wolper, *Cities and Saints*, p. 1.

[128] Ibid., pp. 80-81.

[129] Ibid., p. 81.

isfied and complacent sense of having fulfilled the ritual requirements of Islam.[130] By definition, however, Christianity can perform such a function precisely because it is held to be inferior. In such a role, it is described as "the most perfect form of Islam, although it appears in the guise of infidelity."[131] In other words, it is not an actual Christianity; it is a Christianity of the imagination, deployed in the service of Islam. I am not suggesting that there is anything reprehensible in such symbolism, but it does not represent a Christianity practiced by Christians at the time. Rather like the Jesus of the Qur'ān, who is a Muslim prophet rather than a Christian savior, it is an ideal Muslim form of Christianity.[132] Any enthusiasm for it did not necessarily mean an enthusiasm for Christians, any more than Muslim enthusiasm for a Muslim Jesus meant an acceptance of Christian claims about him. It is therefore comparable to Christian enthusiasm for the Israelite prophets of the Bible despite a suspicion or even a contempt for actual Jews.

The descriptions of Muslims and Christians that appear in contemporary sources, or of Muslims and Christianity, or of Christians and Islam, invariably indicate that neither side saw the other as offering an equally valid path to salvation. The hybrid cults that are known to have existed seem to have involved the appropriation of elements from an earlier religion by adherents of a later. This process might be thought to indicate a degree of toleration, but it does not reflect the kind of bridge that Hasluck claimed to have discovered or the virtues that we claim to admire in our supposedly multicultural world.

Furthermore, the apparently eirenic use of Christian symbols cannot be treated in isolation. They were just as easily used in a more explicit or literal way as signs of an inferior religion. Although Yūnus Emre, for example, has been generally admired for his supposed "humanism" and ecumenical spirit,[133] he was evidently capable of writing lines in which

[130] L. Lewisohn, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity: The Sufi Poetry and Teachings of Maḥmūd Shabistarī* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1995), pp. 82-92.

[131] L. Lewisohn, "The Esoteric Christianity of Islam," in L. Ridgeon, ed., *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), pp. 127-56.

[132] The question is discussed in general by T. Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 1-45. For the attitudes of Rūmī in particular, see Lewisohn, "Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī," pp. 486-503.

[133] A notable example is T. S. Halman, "Yunus Emre's Humanism," in T. S. Halman, *The Humanist Poetry of Yunus Emre*, pp. 11-35. The essay has been revised and reprinted in several different formats.

zünnar was clearly a sign of infidelity and not a symbol of Christianity chosen to suggest a mystical perfection.[134]

History or Hermeneutics?

According to Aflākī, Gorjī Khātūn was talking one day to 'Alam al-Dīn-e Qeyṣar, who was a commander of the sultan Kay Khusraw III as well as a follower of Rūmī.[135] She asked him if any particular miracle had so impressed him that he chose to become a fervent disciple. 'Alam al-Dīn replied that every prophet has a people who love him and every shaykh has a group that follows him. In the case of Rūmī, however, everyone is in complete agreement about loving him and feeling an overwhelming devotion to him. 'Alam al-Dīn describes this as the smallest of the miracles associated with Rūmī. Nevertheless, he asks if any miracle could be greater.

Even if Rūmī never actually wrote that "in every mosque, every temple, and every church" he found "one shrine alone," and even if he was an orthodox Sunnī, his mystical vision is presented as being expansive enough or at least attractive enough to draw followers from temple and church as well as from mosque, despite or perhaps because of the turbulent nature of the world in which he lived. It is possible that Rūmī had followers who remained Christian and who did not see a contradiction—or at least any insuperable contradiction—in being a Christian who followed a famous and revered Muslim teacher. Furthermore, whether or not Rūmī was dependent on Ibn al-'Arabī, either directly or indirectly, and whether or not he adopted a Neoplatonic approach to Sufism as a result, there is little doubt that the Islamic mysticism of which he is so brilliant an exponent had been profoundly influenced at various points by Christian mysticism and itself had a profound influence upon Christian mysticism both directly and through later forms of Jewish mysticism. As in any discussion of Christianity and Islam, and indeed of Judaism, there are reasons why relations between these religions should not be reduced to a simple contrast between "us and them."

We are left, it seems to me, holding two apparently contradictory facts or at least ideas in a certain degree of tension: the vision of Mawlānā was able to speak across sectarian or confessional distinctions, but it was nev-

[134] For example, see *Yunus Emre Divânı. II. Tenkitli Metin*, ed. M. Tatçı (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1990), no. 397.

[135] Aflākī, *The Feats of the Knowers of God*, trans. J. O'Kane, §3.505.

ertheless a Muslim vision proclaimed in Anatolia at a time when conversion to Islam was beginning to accelerate. This tension may be regarded as one of the proverbial ironies of history, and it should not detract in any way from the inspiration that Mawlānā still offers today, whether we are Muslim or Christian or adherents of another religion or perhaps of no religion at all. Indeed, it seems to me that much of the importance of Mawlānā at the moment is not only that he says what he says, but that he says what he says as a Muslim. And yet, the tension should not be forgotten either. What I find fascinating, as a historian, is not just the attraction of apparently timeless truths, but also the way in which such truths emerged from a particular moment in history.

If Rūmī had seen "one shrine," that one shrine would undoubtedly have been Muslim. While scholars have cited passages such as the twenty-third chapter of *Fīhi mā fīh* to support the claim that Rūmī advocated a "mystical universalism,"[136] and have discussed his belief in "a kind of ecumenical essence of spirituality above and beyond sectarian divisions,"[137] there seems to be no doubt that he saw the true goal of the many different paths that he described as the Ka'ba.[138] The final destination is Islam, not Judaism and not Christianity.

Such an admission might encourage Jews, Christians, and indeed anyone else to look more carefully at the history of Anatolia during the decades in which Rūmī was alive while still finding inspiration in his words. Every generation is likely to discover that the voices of the past speak to them in new and often unpredictable ways. However, our debt to these voices is best honored, I believe, if we try to listen to them as carefully as we can, without allowing our own hopes or fears to tell us only what we want them to say. Finding heroes of tolerance in a world in which there is too much bigotry and hatred is no bad thing. Nevertheless, it might be better to admit that this is primarily a question of hermeneutics. It may be laudable and it may indeed be essential, but it is not the primary duty of a historian.

[136] M. Balivet, "Soufisme et universalisme dans le sultanat seldjoukid de Konya au XIII^{e} siècle," in M. Balivet, *Turcobyzantiae: échanges régionaux, contacts urbains* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 2008), pp. 25-55. esp. p. 43.

[137] Lewisohn, "Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī," p. 489

[138] Rūmī, *Fīhi mā fīh*, ed. Furūzānfar, pp. 97-102.

The Contemporary Relevance of Rūmī's Language of the Soul

KABIR HELMINSKI

Introduction

Despite the passage of over 700 years since his death, *Mawlānā*—"Our master"—Rūmī's teachings, remain relevant in many diverse—psychological, emotional, social, religious, literary, and metaphysical—contexts. Rūmī is a master of psychology, a verifier of revelation, a most profound guide to the depths of human nature, an insightful commentator on societal dynamics, a supreme literary genius, and of course, a consummate metaphysician and scientist of ultimate reality.

Both in the wider Western world and in the non-Persian-speaking Islamic world, Rūmī is not known as he rightly deserves. While lip-service has been given to him over the past three decades in the West as a universal voice of peace and love, this—albeit largely superficial—fame and popularity is itself all the more important because he is an authentic voice from within the Islamic spiritual tradition at a time when Islam is widely denigrated from outside. In today's Western Islamophobic society, many within the Muslim community suffer with a sense of malaise, discouragement, and humiliation, knowing what is essentially a religion of peace and truth has come to be viewed as a source of violence, oppression of women, and general intellectual backwardness. Given this disappointing social situation, Rūmī is a voice that needs to be heard, studied, and appreciated in depth.

The fable of the Lion and the Hare, which is found early in the first book of his *Mathnawī*, provides an excellent illustration of the contemporary relevance of Rūmī's thought to some of the social and political problems that plague the modern world.[1] The following meditations on the contemporary relevance of Rūmī's language of the soul are largely framed and informed by this tale (which in his narration is about 500

[1] For a good overview and study of this tale, see Christine van Ruymbeke, "The *Kalīlah wa Dimna* and Rūmī: 'That was the Husk and This is the Kernel,'" *Mawlana Rumi Review*, IV (2013), pp. 85-105, as well as Nicholson's comments in his commentary on Book I, vv. 899-900. – ED.

couplets long[2]), which he had adopted from the Arabic cycle of animal legends known as *Kalīlah wa Dimnah*, which in turn was based on an ancient Indian classic.

The Wise Hare and the Dimwit Lion

As the fable goes, a mighty lion was attacking and preying on the animals of a certain valley. His harassment had afflicted the entire animal population with considerable anxiety. Suffering the risk of general extermination, the beasts call a meeting with the lion to propose a contract with him in order to alleviate the threat of their ongoing slaughter. It was agreed that one of the beasts will be regularly offered as a meal allowance for the lion as part of the deal. In this way, the autocratic lion will be unable to make the beasts his passive prey, while the majority of the animals will at least be saved from the worry of who is to be devoured next. The lion at first opposes the arrangement, offering eloquent arguments in defense of the virtue of individual effort and personal responsibility over the animals' advocacy of necessitarianism and fatalism:

> Freewill is the endeavor to give thanks for His beneficence: your fatalistic trust is the denial of that beneficence. Thanksgiving for the power of acting freely increases your power; fatalism takes the Divine gift out of your hand.[3]

The beasts, however, prove themselves to be equally powerful theologians and oppose the lion by advocating the quietist perspective of resignation to God's will and Providence. In the following verses they preach the doctrine of reliance on God alone:

> There is no work better than trust in God: What, indeed, is dearer to God than resignation? Often do they not flee from affliction only to fall into affliction? Often do they not recoil from the snake only to meet with the dragon? Man devised, and his devising

[2] *The Mathnawí of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí,* ed. and trans. R.A. Nicholson (London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1924-40; Gibb Memorial Series N.S.), Bk. I, vv. 900-1372.

[3] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, I:938-39. Most of the translations below are based upon Nicholson's literal translation, slightly modified for readability.

became a trap: that which he thought to be life was actually the drainer of his blood.[4]

Rūmī places in the mouth of the lion a number of eloquent arguments in defense of freewill, individual responsibility, and making personal exertions (*kasb*), while the animals, to convince the lion that he should accept their terms and cease aggressively exerting himself, preach the virtue of pure trust in God (*tawakkul*). By advocating different Islamic theological positions, both the lion and beasts try to convince each other of the superiority and probity of their individual piety and so ridicule the vanity and inanity of the doctrines of their opposite numbers. However, as Nicholson wryly comments, "though the Lion can preach admirable doctrine when it suits his position, he plays the villain's part all through the story."[5]

In the end the lion agrees with the deal offered him by the animals and begins to get his provender freely provided him without hunting the beasts and scavenging through the jungle. One day a clever hare decides that he doesn't want to play his allotted part in becoming the daily noonday sacrifice to the lion's insatiable appetite. He devises a scheme to undo him. To disorient and trick the lion, the hare intentionally shows up late at noon, where he finds his foe, just as he hoped, furiously tearing up the ground for having been stood up for lunch. In his guile the hare produces an alibi to justify his delay. He relates how he was delayed along the way by another lion who confronted and threatened him, who seized the other plump buck-rabbit who had been traveling with him as his companion as a pledge, demanding that he return immediately with news of his foe, or else he would make his companion his prey. "So the tie of our covenant has now been severed by that other lion," the hare declares. "It was that other lion who barred my way to you. You might as well give up all hope now in having your daily stipend provided as before. I speak the truth and truth is bitter."[6]

Thrown off guard and incensed by the perceived impertinence of this intruder who dared to disrupt his meals and challenge his power, the lion immediately demands to know the whereabouts of the lair of his rival king of the jungle. The hare readily offers to lead him to his rival's lair, which, as it happens, was at the bottom of a well. Upon arriving there, the lion beholds his adversary reflected in the water, with another plump hare at

[4] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, I:916-19.

[5] See *Mathnawī*, Nicholson's commentary on Book I:901, p. 76.

[6] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, I:1178-79.

his side. Enraged, he springs into the well to attack his challenger, a mere reflection of himself, but, of course, is drowned in the well itself.

The World-Well and Universal Reason

Let us now revisit an earlier episode in the fable. Having assessed the situation with his keen mind, the hare had, as mentioned above, determined there was a ruse that he could use to beguile the lion and so prevent becoming his next meal. So he deliberately showed up late for his own noonday date with death and the lion, in an attempt to rouse the lion's wrath and thus trick and distract him. At this juncture, Rūmī introduces an extended metaphysical reflection, which I cite below in full:

> Whole worlds are manifested by Divine Intelligence (*'aql*), which is like an ocean. The forms of our existence are like cups or bowls floating upon the face of this sweet water. They are buoyed for a while, and eventually they fill with water and sink back to the depths from which they came. The Divine Intelligence remains hidden, while the phenomenal world is visible as waves and ocean spray. Whichever form the Ocean takes as a means to manifest itself, the Ocean then takes that means away, casting off that form.
>
> So the heart is made to forget the Giver of conscience, and the arrow forget the Archer. In such a state he is like that rider who thinks he has lost his horse while the steed is obstinately speeding him down the road. That noble man thinks his horse is lost, yet his horse is pulling him fast as wind down the road. Crying out and looking everywhere, the mindless rider gads about from place to place, asking: "Who's stolen my horse? Who is he?" Yet what's this steed, good man, between your thighs?
>
> . . . Spirit is so obvious and immediate that it is lost, like one whose stomach is full of water but whose lips are parched and parted open like a jar. How can you see the colors of red, green, and russet, unless there be the three lights[7] visible before

[7] Anqaravī, the great commentator on the *Mathnawī*, declares that "the manifestation of the existence of colors in the doctrine of Abī 'Alī Sīnā (Avicenna), as well as according to some other thinkers, is by mediation of the light of Being. There are three kinds of light that cause colors to be manifest, and without two of these, no color would be visible. The first is the light of the eye, second the light of sun and moon, and third, if it is night, the light of a lamp." See *Sharḥ-i kabīr-i Anqaravī bar Mathnawī-yi Mavlavī*, trans. into Persian

you. But since your mind has been immersed in those colors, the colors have become a veil and we do not recognize the Light. But when at night those colors are concealed, we realize our seeing of them depends upon light. One cannot perceive colors without an external light, and it is the same with the perception of imaginal colors internally.

This outward light is from the sun and stars, while the inward light is a reflection of Divine Radiance. The eye's light is derived from the light of the heart, and the light of the heart is from the Divine Light, which is pure and separate from the light of intellect and sense.

There was no light at night and so you saw no color, so that by what's opposed to light—darkness—color appeared. First one sees light, then color, and so it is that by its opposite (darkness) you can apprehend color instantaneously. . . .

Forms are bodied forth from the reality of Spirit as a lion springs from a thicket, or as an articulate voice and speech arises from thought. Voice and speech come from Thought, but you don't know where lies the Sea of Thought. But when you see the waves of speech are beautiful, you know the Sea from which they come is noble. . . .

The form was born from the Word and died again; the wave fell back into the Sea. Form appeared from formlessness and then fled back to it, for: "Indeed, unto Him we are returning."[8]

Rūmī's purpose in making this lengthy metaphysical excursus is to underline the importance of self-reflection. He explains that although in appearance "brute force" rules the world, in reality it is "right thought"—the hare symbolizing Divine Intelligence for the poet, and his artful stratagem being an emanation of Universal Mind (*'aql*)—that governs all events and determines the final outcome of phenomena. Just as the quality of any action depends on the underlying thought animating it, all human perceptions are but by-products of the colors and shapes perceived by the light of imagination, which in turn derive from the light of Divine Intelligence. The lion's carnal, material reason, enslaved to forms and infatuated by colorful phenomena, lacks divine illumination; hence his susceptibility to the ruse of the hare, symbol of the human intelligence guided by Universal Reason. Like the rider who cannot see the horse of his own mind

by 'Iṣmat Satārzāda (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zarrīn, 1374 A.Hsh./1995), vol. II, p. 482. – ED.

[8] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, I:1109-29, 1136-38, 1140; an allusion to Qur'ān, II:151.

while it is carrying him galloping away under him, the lion is kept in the dark, enraged by the colorful reflection of himself in the well of his own mind; he cannot perceive which Archer has fired the arrow of his wrathful phantasy, his heart being unaware of his secret conscience. Discernment between true and false perceptions, between illusion and reality, remain the exclusive province of the enlightened intelligence of the wise hare, Universal Reason.[9]

Another important teaching we may glean from the fable is that the hare—Universal Reason—represents the power of divine Mercy which alone can restore harmony in the jungle. The exercise of intelligence inspired by this divine Reason within man is a mercy which partakes of the ineluctable Law of Compensation, a teaching Rūmī elaborates in a later passage of the fable as follows:

> The Lion leapt into the pit he had dug for himself, for his oppression had come back to haunt him. The iniquity of those who do evil is their own deep dark well, just as the wise have said. The more oppressively one behaves, the more terrifyingly deep one's well. Such is divine Justice; "requite ill for ill,"[10] as the dictate commands. O you who would dig a pit of crime, you are laying down a snare for yourself alone! If you must spin a web of sin about yourself like a silkworm, at least take care it not envelop you completely!
>
> Never think the weak are without a defender: remember the words of the Qur'ān: "When God's succor and triumph come . . ."[11] If the wretched of the earth beg for help, their cries shall reach the Heavenly Hosts. . . .
>
> The lion saw himself in the well, and in his rage he could not distinguish himself at that moment from the enemy. He regarded his own reflection as his enemy, and so he took up arms against himself.
>
> O many an evil that you see in others is your own nature projected upon them, O you to whom this may concern! In them has been reflected your own very being: your hypocrisy, oppression, and drunken brawling. That miscreant is you yourself, and you are striking those blows at yourself: you are cursing yourself at

[9] See *Mathnawī*, Nicholson's commentary on Book I:1109-20.

[10] Alluding to: "The guerdon of an ill-deed is an ill the like thereof. But whoever pardons and amends, his wage is the affair of God" (Qur'ān, XLII:40).

[11] Qur'ān, CX:1.

> that moment. You cannot see that evil clearly in yourself, or else you would oppose yourself with all your soul. O simpleton, this attack you make is upon yourself, just like that lion who assaulted himself. When you reach the core of your own being, then you will know that that vileness was from yourself. At the bottom of the well the lion realized that what seemed to be the "other" was really his own image.[12]

The jungle depicted in this passage is the jungle of our own hearts. It is inevitable that the outer world of human society in general will reflect the ignorance and iniquity within the hearts of its people. As Rūmī repeats over and over in this passage, our perception of evil in others is more often than not simply a refusal to acknowledge the presence of those similar or identical reprehensible qualities within ourselves. On the political level, the Lion and Hare fable thus forms a perfect allegory for the everyday news of the world: the lion's irrational rage at his enemies we witness today continuously played out, decade after decade, in totalitarian ideologies, in the hegemony of globalist empires, in military invasions waging "just wars," in misguided religious crusades, and in fundamentalist persecutions of opposing sectarian minorities, etc.

However, what is less understood, and certainly almost never taken into account by media analysts, political pundits, or social historians, is that no one ever escapes the Law of Compensation, that every oppressor ultimately pays in degree or kind for his oppression. Thus, on the spiritual level, Rūmī's teaching informs us that there exists an Inspirer of Conscience, an All-Merciful Teacher and Guide, which is the ever-present Divine Intelligence and Universal Reason, which, when necessary, can inspire an insignificant hare with a rescue plan, a solution, a way to the Truth.

In sum, according to Rūmī's insight into this ancient fable, our true well-being is always dependent on our relationship with Divine Intelligence. Human welfare rests as much on metaphysical as on physical foundations. As much as we may be overwhelmed and bewildered by the vicissitudes and circumstances of the jungle of the passions, distracted by the colorful variety of the realm of the world's multiplicity, there is a deeper spiritual reality from which we can derive security (*amanah*) and certainty (*yaqīn*). Thus, the wise hare, relates Rūmī, when warmly congratulated by the rest of the beasts of the chase, rather than being made giddy and proud by their celebration and commendation of the success of

[12] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, I:1308-13, 1315, 1317-25.

his ruse which had killed their oppressor, modestly shunned their praise, preferring to acknowledge that higher grace which sustained his abilities:

> From God come privileges, from God come changes of fortune.
>
> God sends his succor at regular intervals to skeptics and seers alike.
>
> Be mindful! Do not exult in a kingdom of transience. You who are in bondage to vicissitude, do not act as though you are free!
>
> A realm beyond vicissitude is waiting for you, and the drums are beating beyond the planets.
>
> Beyond vicissitude are the eternal sovereigns: their spirits are circling with the Cupbearer perpetually.
>
> If you will renounce these worldly intoxications for a day or two, you will taste the Wine of Paradise.[13]

Having outlined some of the spiritual teachings in Rūmī's Lion and Hare fable, what material pertinence, it may asked, does it actually have for today's society? How can the words and ideas of a thirteenth-century Persian Sufi mystic help us meet the challenges of the global dilemmas that we face today? How can Rūmī's poetic wisdom help us address complex issues such as the environmental crisis that forces us to look at the consequences of our own greed and consumption? Or the arms crisis that threatens annihilation through nuclear holocaust, or by perpetual war through dependence on the manufacturing companies that sustain the military-industrial complex? Or the financial crisis that allows billions of people to starve in poverty while concentrating wealth in the hands of a tiny minority? Or the crisis of surveillance and technological control which currently looms, which will allow governments to propagandize entire populations, monitor communications, and stifle the dissent and activities of any citizens who threaten the status quo? Might it be wiser to focus fully on solving the complex technological issues underlying the unprecedented problems of the present day rather than scan medieval Islamic poetic texts for direction and guidance about what are, it would appear, practically speaking, purely modern afflictions?

Far from it. Rūmī remains as relevant today as he was in the mid-thirteenth century. The problems of the present are both informed and illumined by the solutions proposed by bygone sages; the answers we must formulate to these problems demand as much spiritual vision and

[13] Ibid., I:1367-72.

imagination as they do practical, empirical analysis. Just as great works of art of all civilizations are timelessly relevant to modern aesthetic concerns, so the insights of ancient mystical psychology remain relevant to the social psychology underlying today's complex problems. Rūmī's insights can help us in formulating a fresh approach and response to these current troubles, and his message to us, although conveyed by means of poetic fable and allegory, I believe can be summed up in three symbols: a mirror, a compass or astrolabe, and a touchstone, each of which conveys its own wisdom.

The Mirror

One kind of mirror is a sacred text, preserved and valued for centuries, that gives us a perspective on our own times and situation. While no text can entirely escape the cultural and historical conditions within which it was created, the *Mathnawī* speaks to us from a relatively timeless dimension. It is a mirror because it helps us to see ourselves from an eternal perspective. Focused entirely on the present we lack the perspective and the capacity for reflection. Rūmī's timeless perspective, which derives from the quality of inspiration that created the *Mathnawī*, helps us to realize the nature of the times we live in, and allows us to see ourselves. In one passage of the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī describes how the entire world is a narrow cell within which each person only sees what is shown him. It is as if we are looking at the sun through blue sunglasses which makes the horizon appear blue, or gazing through a red lens which colors all things with red, but the Complete Human Being, *al-Insān al-kāmil*, is like a mirror "in which all colors are reflected; in him everyone sees his own good and evil qualities."[14] Thus, the Prophet Muḥammad, states Rūmī, referred to himself as a mirror: "I am a hand-polished mirror. Hindu and Turk gaze upon me and see what exists within themselves."[15] The saints are also mirrors in which we see ourselves reflected:

> If you spit at the saint, you spit at your own face, just as when you strike a mirror, it is your own reflection you hit. If you see an ugly face there, that is your own countenance therein; and if you see Jesus and Mary: it is but you. But he is neither this nor that,

[14] *Mathnawī*, Nicholson's commentary on Book I:2370.

[15] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, I:2370.

but simple and pure, and has only placed your own face before you to see.[16]

There is also a parallel teaching about the mirror symbol in a later account of the same Lion and Hare fable (found in Book VI of the *Mathnawī*), where Rūmī analyses the mental attitude of the lion's rage as follows:

> The blind follower of authority was subjugated by the hare: He was boiling with fury from his own fancy. So when you, enthralled by all six directions, wreck vengeance on your enemy, you are in error concerning all six. That enmity in your enemy is reflected from God, for it is derived from the divine attributes of Wrath manifested there. And that sin in him is akin to your own sin: you must wash that evil disposition out of your own nature. Your evil nature showed itself to you in him because he was like the surface of a mirror for you.[17]

The lion's mental attitude—which modern psychology refers to as the phenomenon of "projection"—underlies most of the military conflicts of modern man; the lion's blind jealousy and rage instructs us that our external "enemy," the "other," is in fact nothing but a mirror which displays our own internal vice and shortcomings.[18] The lion's wrath, according to Rūmī's analysis, was merely a projection and reflection of the evil nature within himself. It is clear that the fable speaks directly to any military strategist, advising us that our enemies are, more often than not, nothing more than a projection upon others of our own shortcomings and flaws.

The Compass or Astrolabe

Just like the mirror of the saints, the compass that Rūmī offers us also orients us toward the Real. Without a metaphysical compass to orient us we become lost in a labyrinth of speculation, subjective values, and mere opinion. Those who have the capacity to appreciate this metaphysical

[16] Ibid., IV:2141-43.

[17] Ibid., VI:3148-53.

[18] Cf. C.G. Jung's essay: "Introduction: Individual and Mass Psychology," in his *Essays on Contemporary Events*, trans. E. Walsh *et al.* (London: Kegan Paul, 1946), pp. ix-xviii. – Ed.

compass—and clearly there will always be with us those who live in denial of such spiritual realities—will be guided by it as they contend with the challenges of the present. The more that such enlightened individuals turn to profound sources of traditional wisdom, the more this world can be protected from the dehumanizing forces which threaten social justice and human dignity.

All of Rūmī's stories, poems, prayers, and metaphors are unified by a metaphysics centered upon the Divine attributes of Beauty, Generosity, Mercy, and Love. All of existence flows from and returns to that Divine Reality. This is his orientation (*qibla*), his true north. In the following verses from the *Mathnawī*, which occur just before the passage from Book VI cited above, Rūmī speaks of man himself as being an astrolabe (using the Arabic word *uṣṭurlāb*, from which the English "astrolabe" is derived) by which the spiritual astronomer can decipher the divine mysteries:

> Man is an astrolabe of the highest mysteries: his character is to be a place of epiphany for the Signs of God. Whatever appears within man is a divine reflection, just like the moon shining on a river's running water. The lines of the Spider (*'ankabūt*) etched across the astrolabe (the uppermost tablet that is criss-crossed by lines and figures representing the Zodiac) are there to confirm the presence of Eternal Qualities, so the Spider may expound in detail the firmament of the Invisible Realm and Sun of the Spirit. However, without an astronomer to read them, this Spider and astrolabe of spiritual direction have fallen into the hands of common folk. God vouchsafed this spiritual astrology to the prophets, since to see the invisible realm requires supernatural vision. Generations have fallen into the Well of the World, where they saw their own image reflected therein. Recognize that whatever is revealed to you in this Well comes from outside, else you're like that lion who plunged down and drowned therein.[19]

Only those who know how to use this human astrolabe, that is, the prophets, perceive these hidden, divine mysteries within man. Those who cannot use the astrolabe to perceive these divine mysteries are like the lion who plunged down into the pit of illusion, the world-well-mirror, where they saw only the reflection of their own face, the image of their own flaws and faults shimmering therein.

[19] Ibid., VI:3138-45.

But for the mystics who are attuned to love (*'ishq*), "which is an astrolabe of divine mysteries,"[20] who have spiritual insight, that human astrolabe can be used to apprehend the divine Attributes, just like the spider on the astrolabe reflects the internal divine nature in man. By utilizing their spiritual insight and orienting themselves by means of this internal compass, they can perceive the realm of the Spirit. Rūmī describes human intelligence, if used correctly, as being just such an astrolabe, through which "you can apprehend how close the Sun of Being is to you. That nearness is indescribable and directionless, beyond left and right, and before and behind."[21]

The Touchstone

Within each person exists a spiritual intelligence by which he or she discerns truth from falsehood. "The genuine from the counterfeit gold cannot be assayed well without a touchstone to distinguish their weight. In whosoever's soul God sets a touchstone can immediately distinguish what's certain from what's dubious."[22] If one can't locate this touchstone of true humanity, capable of distinguishing between the genuine article and the counterfeit within oneself, then it is better to follow someone else who already possesses this inner criterion, Rūmī advises:

> A beam was cast on the counterfeit coin by pure gold. Without a touchstone don't try, by mere fancy, to assay the difference. If you have a touchstone, go ahead, choose; otherwise, go and pledge yourself to someone intelligent enough to distinguish between the two. Either you must have a touchstone within your own soul, or if you don't know the way, find someone who does.[23]

Complementing this interior touchstone within the soul, the Qur'ān and the mystical states of the prophets also constitute an exterior touchstone; by constant study and meditation upon these, the difference between sterling and counterfeit coinage may be assayed, and spiritual truth from error discerned:

[20] Ibid., I:110.

[21] Ibid., IV:3685-86.

[22] Ibid., I:299-300.

[23] Ibid., II:745-47.

> Intelligence and sensual self-gratification are contraries, O champion. Don't regard anyone wrapped up in sensual gratification as intelligent. What's enslaved to sensuality is called "fantasy" ; fantasy is the counterfeit coin of the sterling coin of intelligence. Without a touchstone the difference between fantasy and intelligence can't be assayed, so quickly put both of these to the touchstone. That touchstone is the Qur'ān and the mystical states of the prophets, for the touchstone calls the counterfeit coin to "Come! Then when you place yourself on me, you'll see how foreign you are to my spiritual heights and depths."[24]

Many in the contemporary world see human nature as something malleable, arbitrarily shaped by education, the media, and being subject to various social influences, too often under the control of those with the power and money. However, innate within each person, says Rūmī, there lies a touchstone which is immune to all such external influences. That touchstone allows one to perceive the uses of adversity in order to grasp how blessings often come disguised as calamities. The touchstone bestows a knowledge of the Divine within the heart of reality itself:

> Everyone can distinguish mercy from wrath, whether he is wise or ignorant or corrupt, but a mercy hidden in wrath, or wrath hidden in the heart of mercy can only be recognized by one whose nature is divine, whose heart contains the spiritual touchstone.[25]

The human heart is the instrument of theophany, the locus in which the divine experiences itself as other. In the following verses, Rūmī relates how the Devil (*Iblīs*) asked the Caliph Mu'āwiya how he could tell the difference between false illusion and truth.

> Iblis asked, "Can you tell a lie from the truth,
> O you who are filled with illusion?"
> Mu'āwiya answered, "The Prophet has given a clue,
> a touchstone to know the base coin from the true.
> He has said: 'That which is false troubles the heart,
> but Truth brings joyous tranquility.'"[26]

[24] Ibid., IV:2301-05.

[25] Ibid., III:1506-08.

[26] Ibid., II:2732-34.

Thus within every sound and pure heart, but especially in the heart of the Complete Human Being (*al-Insān al-kāmil*), exists a touchstone that discerns between good and ill and distinguishes error and deceit from truth and sincerity.

Conclusion

From the foregoing I hope I have shown how the wisdom within an ancient Indian animal fable first translated into Arabic in the tenth century, then versified by a thirteenth-century Persian poet, has relevance to modern concerns in the twentieth-first century. As we have seen, the wise hare exemplifies the Divine Intelligence operating within the world and man, offering guidance and disclosing the truth within this world of illusion—the well of human passion and rage. An insignificant, powerless creature inspired by Divine Intelligence leads the lion toward a fate which his jealousy and pride had made inevitable. The following lines from this fable concerning knowledge, penned by Rūmī in a passage of the *Mathnawī* subtitled "In Illustration of the Wisdom of the Hare and in Exposition of the Excellence and Advantage of Knowledge," which today are still memorized by children in grammar schools in Afghanistan and Iran, constitute some of the most famous verses in all of Islamic literature about the benefits of learning and knowledge.

> Knowledge is the seal of the kingdom of Solomon. The whole world is form. Knowledge is the Spirit. . . . The human being has many secret enemies. The cautious person is the wise one. At every instant there are secret creatures, both good and ill, every moment knocking on the heart. If you go to wash in the river and a thorn pricks you beneath the surface, although hidden, you still feel its barb. The sharp barbs of inspiration and temptation come from thousands of beings, not just one. Wait for your bodily senses to be transmuted, so you can see them and the problem solved for you. Then you will know whose words you have rejected and whose you have followed.[27]

The three symbols of mirror, astrolabe, and touchstone are of course internal, psychological realities serving to orient us towards that higher consciousness which is called by names such as Universal Reason or heart. Rūmī's *Mathnawī* is itself a mirror reflecting reality and a touchstone of

[27] Ibid., I:1030, 1034-40.

truth, which offers insights from an "eternal" spiritual perspective and addresses and illuminates the transient but real concerns of the present. His symbol of the mirror of phenomena—the lion's plunging down into the mirror of the world-well—also affords us timeless observations concerning the psychology of the projection of human anger. Likewise, his exposition of the spiritual astrology of the internal astrolabe within man that reflects divine Qualities presents us with a spiritual compass by which we can distinguish what should be the true metaphysical direction of our terrestrial journey. Similarly, the touchstone he presents us with allows us to cut through the deceits of today's materialistic environment and reconnect with the eternal aspects of our humanity, and reconnect with the eternal aspects of our humanity, which is, after all, the function of all great world literature.[28]

Much of what passes for knowledge today, especially in our mass media, is like writing on the water:

> When the pen is of wind and the scroll is of water,
> Whatever you write vanishes quickly.
> It is written on water:
> If you expect constancy from it
> You'll wind up biting your own hands.
> The wind in human beings is vanity and desire;
> Only when you have abandoned vanity
> Will His message come to us.
> The messages of the Maker are sweet;
> They abide from head to foot, from first to last.
> The speeches and nations of the politicians pass away;
> The speeches and community of the Prophets abide. . . .
> The royal images stamped on coins will vanish.
> But the name of Ahmad is permanently inscribed,
> And this is the name of all the Prophets.
> The hundredth includes the ninety-nine.[29]

In every age, humanity as a whole faces the possibility of waking up to its spiritual nature. The crisis of our times is forcing us to recognize the destructiveness of our collective egoism and to acknowledge our innate nature, our *fiṭra*, which exists beyond the prison of the five senses and all

[28] His *Mathnawī* is literally a touchstone as well, being one of three books in Persian used for the purposes of divination (the other two being the *Dīvān*s of Ḥāfiẓ and Sa'dī). – ED.

[29] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, I:1099-1103, 1105-1106.

the compulsions and fears these produce. What remains for us to do is to distill this relatively timeless knowledge into a language and a way of life more in harmony with the requirements of Reality—*al-Ḥaqq*. The beauty and spiritual depth of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī offers a creative and explicit language of the Soul that can inform a desperate humanity in its contemporary defining moment.

PART III

Historical and Theological Perspectives on Rūmī's Oeuvre

Towards a Chronology of the Poems in the *Dīvān-i Shams*: A Prolegomenon for a Periodization of Rumi's Literary Oeuvre

FRANKLIN LEWIS

Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī in his *Mathnawī* interweaves, and sometimes blends, at least four distinct narrative voices, or authorial postures and personas. In Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's *Kulliyāt-i Shams* or *Dīvān-i kabīr*, there are even more voices or modalities than this, some corresponding to thematic genres, such as his epithalamiums for Sulṭān Valad and Fāṭima Khānum, or his many poems for the ceremonies of initiation of young adepts on the path.[1] Other modal genres, or voices—epideictic, didactic, lyrical, narrative, devotional, etc.—arise from the speaking persona's relationship to the audience or putative addressee, and the nature of the speech act reflected by the poem. We might categorize at least a dozen different stances adopted by the authorial persona of Mawlānā Rūmī's[2] *ghazal*s in relation to the addressee, by which a particular historical personage is not necessarily intended, but rather the different kinds of "I" which converse with or apostrophize the various types of "thou": the desperate, even frantic, voice of the lover destroyed by separation from the beloved, the importunate pleading of the disciple with his master, the praise of the lover of the beloved, the didactic tone of the master to his disciple, the awe of the worshipper before the *mysterium tremendum*, the wise sage who knows a way out of suffering or perplexity, the human being astounded by nature and the workings of the world, the

[1] This essay was first presented in Konya, Turkey as a lecture in English in 2007 on the occasion of the centenary of the anniversary of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's birth. It was subsequently published in Persian, in a special issue of *Iran Nameh* devoted to Rūmī (http://fis-iran.org/en/irannameh/volxxv/1-2rumi) as "Dar āmadī bar ta'yīn-i tārīkh-i sarāyish-i ghazaliyyāt-i Mawlānā," *Iran Nameh* 25, 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1388/2009 and online: http://fis-iran.org/fa/irannameh/volxxv/1-2rumi/worksofMawlana).

[2] Henceforth Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī will be referred to as Mawlana Rumi or simply Rumi, without diacriticals, since his name is widely and well established as "Rumi" in recent western literature, so that repeated use of a technical system to transliterate his name is unnecessary and might seem rather pedantic.

celebrant of festivals and rites, the energetic singer who cannot repress the impromptu urge to versify the mundane things going on around him.[3]

The most powerful computers running sophisticated algorithms of stylistic analysis according to the most refined applications of computing to the humanities will likely never be able to construct for us a detailed systematic chronology for the oeuvre of Mawlana Rumi (though judicious use of the technology may indeed aid us, once we have established basic criteria with the "naked eye"). Indeed, in the case of the much better-documented life of Shakespeare, we have missing years during which we do not know where the bard was or what he was up to, and the identity of the dark lady or the darker man of the sonnets remains elusive. Even the authorship of several of the plays of Shakespeare has been called into question,[4] and yet we do have dates for the sonnets, and for most of the plays, on which basis we can trace developing themes and preoccupations, as well as stylistic innovations in the bard's work. How far dare we ever hope to achieve a schematic literary chronology for Mawlana Rumi?

Thanks to the labors of Reynold Nicholson and Muḥammad Isti'lāmī, we can be relatively confident that we have close to the authorial text of the *Mathnawī* in hand, despite some rather spectacularly surprising cases of scribal deviation (*taḥrīf*), such as the alteration in the very famous opening line, which had morphed from *bishnaw īn nay chun shikāyat mīkunad* (Listen to this reed as it makes its plaint) to *bishnaw az nay chun hikāyat mīkunad* (Listen as the reed recounts).[5] We owe to the labors of Tawfīq

[3] Many other ways of categorizing the poems by topic, by speaker, by addressee, etc., are certainly possible. For one such attempt at a loose taxonomy, see Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi: Swallowing the Sun* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008).

[4] On the question of Shakespeare's authorship, see for example the recent work, James Shapiro, *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2010).

[5] The version of record for Nicholson's edition, which includes the manuscript variants and all of Nicholson's notes and corrections is now *Mathnawī-yi ma'nawī-yi Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad-i Balkhī: Ākharīn taṣḥīh-i Raynūld A. Nīkulsūn*, ed. Ḥasan Lāhūtī (Hassan Lahouti), 4 vols. (Tehran: Nashr-i Qaṭra, 1383 A.Hsh./2004). A re-issue of this by Mīrāth-i Maktūb (Miras-e Maktoob) is in press. Muḥammad Isti'lāmī's rival edition, with extensive notes and commentary, is *Mathnawī-yi Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad-i Balkhī, Muqaddima va taḥlīl, taṣḥīh-i matn bar asās-i nuskha-hā-yi mu'tabar-i Mathnawī. muqāyisa bā chāp-hā-yi ma'rūf-i Mathnawī, tawżīḥāt va ta'līqāt-i jāmi' va fihrist-hā*, 7 vols. (Tehran: Sukhan, 1379 A.Hsh./1990), the sixth printing, with corrections, of the original 1360 A.Hsh./1981 printing by Zavvār.

Subḥānī both the sermons, *Majālis-i sab'a*,[6] and the letters, *Maktūbāt*,[7] of Rumi; and to Muḥammad-'Alī Muvaḥḥid, we are indebted for the text of Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī's lectures and conversations, *Maqālāt*.[8] A great debt is likewise owed to the incomparable Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar for the publication of reliable texts of Rumi's discourses, *Fīhi mā fīh*, and for the discourses, *Ma'ārif*, of both Bahā' al-Dīn Valad and of Burhān al-Din Mūḥaqqiq.[9] And even if Furūzānfar's heroic labors on Mawlana Rumi's huge *Dīvān*[10] have not perfectly established the text (for example, there

[6] *Majālis-i sab'a: haft khiṭābhā*, ed. Tawfīq Subḥānī (Tehran: Kayhān, 1365 A.Hsh./1986), which was earlier published in Turkey, with Turkish translation, as *Mevlânânın yedi Öğüdü*, ed. Ahmet Remzi Akyürek (Istanbul: Bozkurt, 1937), and in Iran, Muḥammad Ramażānī had included them as part of the Kulāla-yi Khāvar *Mathnawī* edition (Tehran, 1315-1319 A.Hsh./1936-40).

[7] The *Maktūbāt* were first published in Turkey by Ahmet Remzi Akyürek and M.F. Nafız Uzluk as *Mevlânâ'nın Mektupları* (Istanbul: Sebat, 1937), fraught with errors, and partially included in the aforementioned Kulāla-yi Khāvar *Mathnawī* edition, and in two subsequent Iranian editions based on the Turkish one, before Tawfīq Subḥānī established the edition of record, *Maktūbāt-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī* (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 1371 A.Hsh./1992).

[8] Shams al-Dīn-i Tabrīzī's lectures and sayings have been partially published in Tehran beginning in 1970, then in Nāṣir al-Dīn Ṣāḥib al-Zamānī's *Khaṭṭ-i sivvum: dar bāra-yi shakhṣīyat, sukhanān va andīsha-yi Shams-i Tabrīzī* (Tehran: Maṭbū'ātī-yi 'Aṭā'ī, 1351 A.Hsh./1972), and then by Muḥammad-'Alī Muvaḥḥid (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Ṣan'atī-yi Aryāmihr, 1356 A.Hsh./1977). But the full critical edition of Muvaḥḥid is now *Maqālāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* (Tehran: Khʷārazmī, 1369 A.Hsh./1990). For fuller publication details of the foregoing corpus of critical editions of Rumi's works, please see F. D. Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000, new edition 2008).

[9] Furūzānfar's editions of the prose corpus of Rumi and his inner circle include: *Kitāb-i Fīhi mā fīh, az guftār-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, mashhūr bi Mawlāwī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1330 A.Hsh./1951 and several reprints by Amīr Kabīr, including 5th printing, 1362 A.Hsh./1983); for Bahā' al-Dīn Valad, *Ma'ārif: Majmū'a-yi mavā'iẓ va sukhanān-i Sulṭān al-'ulamā Bahā al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn-i Khaṭībī-yi Balkhī*, ed. Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar, 2 vols. (Tehran: Idāra-yi Kull-i Inṭibā'āt-i Vizārat-i Farhang, 1955 and 1959); and for Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq, *Ma'ārif: Majmū'a-yi mawā'iẓ va kalimāt-i Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq-i Tirmidī*, ed. Badī al-Zamān Furūzānfar (Tehran: Idāra-yi Kull-i Nigārish-i Vizārat-i Farhang, 1340 A.Hsh./1961). A new edition of Burhān al-Dīn's *Ma'ārif*, based on additional manuscripts and a more fully collated text, is in preparation, accompanied by the English translation of Franklin Lewis and Hassan Lahouti.

[10] *Kulliyāt-i Shams yā dīvān-i kabīr*, ed. B. Furūzānfar, 10 vols. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1957-67, then reprinted by Amīr Kabīr: 1355 A.Hsh./1976, and subsequently again). An edition prepared by Tawfīq Subḥānī on the basis of the 2-volume Konya manuscript (Konya ms. # 68-69 from the library of the Mevlana Müzesi) copied out between the months of Shavvāl 768 and Rabī' al-awwal 770 A.H. (late spring 1367 and autumn 1368), is also now available as *Dīvān-i kabīr, kulliyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī-yi Mawlānā*

are scores of *rubā'īs* included that do not belong to Rumi),[11] this critical edition of his lyrical poems, side by side the aforementioned texts, provide us with primary documents that are reliable (if not always forthcoming) witnesses from the life of Mawlana and his circle. Sadly, they address relatively few data points of biography, though, as I argue below, we may yet hope with concentrated attention to tease out significant relevant facts, and on that basis make further plausible conjectures.

Attempts at preserving for posterity a narrative of Rumi's life began with his son, Sulṭān Valad, writing in verse in the appropriately titled *Ibtidā-nāma* (Book of Beginnings) or *Valad-nāma* (Book of Valad, the Son) from Rabī' al-awwal to Jumādī al-thānī 690 (March to June of 1291).[12] This, however, portrays Sulṭān Valad's father, grandfather, and other members of the circle of disciples, in the typological mode of the *tadhkira*, the generic goals of which center, like Plutarch's *Lives*, on the presentation of a morally inspiring example and not on the recovery of documented facts. Aflākī's *Manāqib al-'ārifīn* and Sipahsālār's *Risāla*,[13] consisting of reminiscences collected in Konya between the years 712/1312 and 754/1353, do provide specific dates of some life events and the purported circumstances of composition of a number of particular poems, which Dawlatshāh and Jāmī—writing a century and a half later and in a geographically remote location—amplify and supplement. On a generic continuum, these vitae conform more closely to the horizon of expectations of hagiography than biography, with the proviso that good historical reportage in the Islamicate tradition, as a matter of professional procedure, is supposed to collect the reports of various and conflicting sources, rather than to weave a seamless and unconflicted narrative of a scholar's critical opinions. Nevertheless, the *tadhkira* tradition follows

Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Ḥusayn-i Balkhī-yi Rūmī, ma'rūf bi Mawlāwī, ed. T. Subḥānī (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār va Mafākhir-i Farhangī, 1386 A.Hsh./2008).

[11] Rawan Farhadi and Ibrahim Gamard, *The Quatrains of Rumi* (San Rafael, CA: Sufi Dari Books, 2008), xix-xx, have shown that at least 116 of the 1,983 *rubā'is*, or quatrains, attributed to Rumi in the Furūzānfar edition of the *Dīvān* are not by him.

[12] *Mathnawī-yi Valadī, inshā'-i Bahā' al-Dīn b. Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn-i Balkhī, mashhūr bi Mawlāwī*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humā'ī (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1316 A.Hsh./1937). For a more recent edition, see the *Ibtidā-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī Muvaḥḥid and 'Alī Riḍā Haydarī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Khʷārazmī, 1389 A.Hsh./2010).

[13] Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Aflākī al-'Ārifī, *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*, ed. Taḥsīn Yāzījī (Yazıcı), 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1959, and offset reprinted, Tehran: Dunyā-yi Kitāb, 1362 A.Hsh./1983), and Farīdūn b. Aḥmad Sipahsālār, *Risāla-yi Sipahsālār*, ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1324 A.Hsh./1947; reissued as *Zindigī-nāma-yi Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Mawlāwī* in 1983).

a mythologizing imperative, and tends to beatify "saints," obscuring evidence that interferes with this portrayal and exaggerating tropes that enhance it. With poets, there is a further exegetical imperative that purports to explain, as in the case of the Qur'anic *asbāb al-nuzūl*, or circumstances of revelation of the verses of scripture, the composition or performance circumstances of various poems. Thus, while the hagiographical tradition provides us with many purported dates and life occasions, they must be approached with a hermeneutic of suspicion, in comparison to the primary texts of Mawlana, Shams al-Dīn, Burhān al-Dīn, and Bahā' al-Dīn Valad, which were all composed before their lives became the stuff of legend and were mythopoetically recast.[14]

Schimmel and Gölpınarlı, among others, have pointed to a handful of individual poems that might be dated to a specific time or incident, and have read these against the grain of the *tadhkira*s, not always correctly, as indicating rather different dates for the beginning of the *Mathnawī*, or the age of Rumi when he and Shams met. But no systematic attempt has as yet been undertaken to mine the many poems of the *Dīvān*, or indeed passages of the *Mathnawī*, and put them in dialogue with other primary sources, such as *Majālis-i sab'a*, *Fīhi mā fīh*, and Rumi's letters (which do contain the names of particular individuals with whom Rumi corresponded, including the Seljuq Sultan, 'Izz al-Dīn Kay Kawus II, who reigned from 643/1246, or 646/1248 to 657/1260, and who corresponded extensively with Mawlana Rumi, most especially from 655-659/1257-1261). Some chronological information may be gleaned by this process that will allow us to begin provisionally dating some poems to specific periods, or even years, in the life of Rumi. A more nuanced feel for sequencing and periodization, if not a real chronology of the oeuvre, might emerge as a result, making it possible to trace specific developments in his thought or style, as well as the changing thematic and theological foci of his work, and to better understand topical allusions. One may also interrogate the text of the *Dīvān* to find out whether the many different meters in which Rumi composed were randomly created over the years, or if he sat down with

[14] The supplemental details added to this "Life" of Mawlana Rumi in the fifteenth century by Dawlatshāh Samarqandī, *Tadhkirat al-shu'arā*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abbāsī (Tehran: Bārānī, 1337 A.Hsh./1958), or by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī in *Nafaḥāt al-uns min haẓarāt al-quds*, ed. Mihdī Tawḥīdpūr (Tehran: Maḥmūdī, 1336 A.Hsh./1958 and reprinted Tehran: 'Ilmī, 1375 A.Hsh./1996), are geographically and temporally even more remote, and should be considered even more suspect. For the continuing phenomenon of iconization of Rumi in the modern world, especially surrounding the octocentennial occasion of his birth, see Franklin D. Lewis, "Dar justujū-yi chihra-yi tārikhī-yi Mawlānā," *Iran Nameh* 24, 1 (Spring 1387/2008):1-22 and online: http://fis-iran.org/fa/irannameh/volxxiv/rumi-quest.

special intent to compose poems in certain rare meters at a particular point in his career.

I propose a method of reading Rumi's poetic corpus that assumes that Mawlana's meeting with Shams was not his only significant life event or artistic growth, and that above and beyond the differing genre expectations of *ghazal* and *Mathnawī* that shaped his poems, he did not write or think at age forty-five in a fashion completely undifferentiated from the way he wrote at age fifty-five or sixty-five, but like other poets, he experienced intellectual, artistic, stylistic, and human development. I believe that a systematic application of this hypothesis to his oeuvre will lead us to a more dynamic vision of Rumi's truly outstanding poetic achievement and somewhat dispel the aura of mystical unknowing that views Mawlana's poems as emerging orphically, outside of time, without differentiation of content or changing views, like a "preserved tablet," or *lawḥ maḥfūẓ*. We would do well to remember that even the Qur'ān (revealed between c. 610 and 632 CE) has abrogating and abrogated verses, *nāsikh wa mansūkh*, and reveals considerable stylistic difference from the early to the later Suras; therefore, if the *Mathnawī* is, as has been said, the Qur'ān in Persian tongue,[15] one must accept that periodizing the corpus of poems, both the *Mathnawī* and the *Dīvān*, which the hagiographies suggest to us were composed over the thirty-year period 642/1244 to 672/1273, is rather crucial to our understanding of the poet and his beliefs.

The project of constructing a provisional chronology, still very much in its infancy, ought to focus on poems in the *Dīvān* which make explicit mention of particular dates, particular individuals (Shams, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb, or Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī), as well as considering various internal

[15] This phrase has been alternately attributed to 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (see below) and Shaykh-i Bahā'ī of 'Āmul (in the Kulāla-yi Khāvar edition of the *Mathnawī*, p. vi). In my *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West* (2000), p. 467, I listed it as attributed to Jāmī in this form: "The Mystic Masnavi of our Rumi: / Koran incarnate in the Persian tongue! // How can I describe him and his majesty? / Not Prophet, but revealer of a Book." *Mathnawī-yi Mawlāwī-yi ma'nawī / hast Qur'ān dar zabān-i pahlavī // man chi gūyam waṣf-i ān 'ālī-janāb / nīst payghambar walī dārad kitāb //*. As I subsequently argued in the preface to the revised 2008 edition of *Rumi: Past and Present*, p. xx, although it was quite common for these verses to appear on the title page of editions of the *Mathnawī* printed in India in the nineteenth century, the first occurrence of these verses that the efforts of Hassan Lahouti and myself have been able to trace appear in the commentary of Valī Muḥammad Akbarābādī, *Sharḥ-i Mathnawī mawsūm bi Makhzan al-asrār*, ed. Najīb Māyil Haravī, 7 vols. (Tehran: Nashr-i Qaṭra, 1382 A.Hsh./2003), written in 1728 and attributed there to Jāmī. These verses have not been found anywhere in the published corpus of Jāmī's or Shaykh Bahā'ī's writings, although the title/phrase *Mathnawī-yi ma'nawī-yi Mawlāwī* does appear on a book binding of a manuscript of the *Mathnawī* dating to the Timurid era.

traces of the composition history of the *Mathnawī*. Synthetic studies of the *Dīvān* and its poetics have been few, given the central importance of the work to the tradition.[16] Though the past decade has produced a flurry of interest, most studies of recent vintage on the *Dīvān* of Mawlana Rumi primarily serve as commentaries for particular poems, as thematic surveys and concordances, or as glossaries of the mystical terminology.[17] Several scholars have raised questions about various periods in Rumi's life, including the age at which he met Shams or began composing the *Mathnawī*, but except for isolated forays into the dating of a particular poem, there has been no sustained and significant discourse on the question of chronology of the oeuvre.[18]

[16] Taqī Pūrnāmdāriyān, *Dāstān-i payāmbarān dar Kulliyāt-i Shams* (Tehran: Mu'assisa-yi Muṭāli'āt va Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1365 A.Hsh./1986) and especially on the poetics of Mawlānā's *ghazal*s, Pūrnāmdāriyān's *Dar sāya-yi āftāb: Shi'r-i fārsī va sākht-shikanī dar shi'r-i Mawlāwī* (Tehran: Nashr-i Sukhan, 1380 A.Hsh./2001), and also Dr. Maryam Khalīlī Jahāntīgh, *Sīb-i bāgh-i jān: Justārī dar tarfand-hā va tamḥīdāt-i hunarī-yi ghazal-i Mawlānā* (Tehran: Nashr-i Sukhan, 1380 A.Hsh./2001). In western languages, we may count Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rumi* (London: Fine Books, 1978; and a revised edition, State University of New York Press, 1991); and Fatemeh Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric: The Case of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998).

[17] These include: Dr. Muḥammad-Riżā Shafī'ī-Kadkanī, *Guzīda-yi ghazaliyāt-i Shams* (Tehran: Shirkat-i Sahāmī, 1353 A.Hsh./1974); Dr. 'Abbās Kay-Manish, *Partaw-i'irfān: Sharḥ-i iṣṭilāḥāt-i 'irfānī dar Kulliyāt-i Shams*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sa'dī, 1366 A.Hsh./1987; 'Alī-Riżā Mukhtārpūr Quhrūdī, *'Ishq dar Manẓūma-yi shamsī: Vāzha-yābī-yi 'ishq dar Dīvān-i Kabīr-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad-i Balkhī* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1378 A.Hsh./1999); Dr. Riżā Ashrafzāda, *Surūd-i khʷurshīd* (Tehran: Nashr-i Rūzigār, 1379 A.Hsh./2000); Dr. Niẓām al-Dīn Nūrī, *Āyāt va lughāt-i Kulliyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* (Tehran: Nashr-i Zuhra, 1380 A.Hsh./2001); Abū al-Qāsim Partaw, *Rahāyish-i tishnigān: Gashtī dar Divān-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad* (Tehran: Kavīr, 1381 A.Hsh./2002); Dr. Sayyida Maryam Abū al-Qāsimī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt va mafāhīm-i 'irfānī* (Tehran: Vizārat-i Farhang va Irshād-i Islāmī, 1383 A.Hsh./2004); Majīd Sarmadī, *Sī-pāra 'ishq: Tafsīr-i ghazal-hā-yi Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* (Tehran: Samīr, 1384 A.Hsh./2005); Tawfīq H. Subḥānī, *Kashf al-abyāt-i Kulliyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār va Mafākhir-i Farhangī, 1385 A.Hsh./2006); Bahā' al-Dīn-i Khurramshāhī, *Insān-am ārizū-st: Barguzīda va sharḥ-i ghazaliyāt-i Mawlānā* (Tehran: Nigāh, 1386 A.Hsh./2007); Dr. Bihrūz Tharvatiyān, *Sharḥ va naqd-i ghazaliyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* (Tehran: Sāzmān-i Tablīghāt-i Islāmī, 1387 A.Hsh./2008).

[18] Afzal Iqbal has shown the most interest in this question in *The Life and Work of Muhammad Jalal-ud-Din Rumi*, 6th ed. (Lahore: Pakistan National Council, 1991), but the biographies of Badī' al-Zamān Furūzānfar, *Risāla-yi taḥqīq dar aḥwāl va zindigī-yi Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad mashhūr bi Mawlāwī* (1937), revised edition (Tehran: Zavvār, 1954); Hellmut Ritter, "Philologika XI: Maulānā Ǧalāladdīn Rūmī und sen Kreis," *Der Islam* 26 (1942):140-44; Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, *Mevlâna Celâleddin: hayatı, felsefesi, eserleri, eserlerinden seçmeler* (Istanbul: Inkılap, 1951); Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal*

I have urged a hermeneutic of suspicion toward the *manāqib* and *tadhkira* literature qua hagiographic vitae, meaning that we must look in the first instance for internal evidence in the primary sources. And yet, I must acknowledge this caveat: we cannot entirely dismiss Sulṭān Valad, Sipahsālār, and Aflākī, because an inveterately radical suspicion would so destabilize the narrative(s) of Rumi's life, that we would be left with a chaotic absence of concrete details. The primary biographical evidence of the poems and discourses can only be interpreted in the framework of the *tadhkira*s, leaving us in somewhat of a circular loop of analysis. But let us see if we can begin to fix certain points on that compass.

Some points of a chronology of Mawlana Rumi's life are provided in the table below.

Outline of a Chronology of Mawlana Rumi's Life

600-7/1204-10	Composition of Bahā' al-Dīn Valad's *Ma'ārif*
604/1207	Birth of Rumi
621/1224	Marriage of Rumi to Gawhar Khātūn
623/1226	Birth of Sulṭān Valad
628/1231	Death of Rumi's father, Bahā al-Dīn Valad
c. 629/1232	Arrival in Konya of Burhān al-Dīn, Bahā' al-Dīn's disciple and Rumi's teacher
	* Composition of Burhān al-Dīn's *Ma'ārif*
c. 629-34/1232-37	Rumi a student in Aleppo and Damascus
	* Shams first meets Rumi during this time in Syria
635?/1238?	Burhān al-Dīn directs Rumi's further spiritual discipline: fasting, seclusion, and reading of his father's *Ma'ārif*
	* Rumi returns to Konya, an accomplished scholar/mystic Takes over father's role as leader of disciple community
	* Composition of *Majālis-i sab'a* (?)
638/1241	Death of Burhān al-Dīn
	* Rumi's association with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb begins
642/1244	Arrival of Shams in Konya (November)
	* Traditional belief: Rumi only now begins composing

Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalâloddin Rumi, revised ed. (Albany, NY: State University Press, 1993) and also her *I Am Wind, You Are Fire: The Life and Work of Rumi* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1992); as well as the present writer's *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West*, revised ed. (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008) all treat aspects of the life chronology that bear upon the poetry. The efforts at revision are discussed in the latter, e.g., pp. 317-20.

	lyrical poetry (this seems suspect as there are poems in *Majālis-i sab'a*)
643/1246	Shams leaves Konya * Rumi stops composing poems, but resumes after receiving letters from Shams
644/1247	Shams returns to Konya, new poems are composed
645/1248	Shams disappears from Konya forever
After 645/1248	Rumi takes at least two trips to Syria in search of Shams * Composes frantic *ghazal*s of loss * Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb is chosen as Rumi's successor as head of disciples * A conspiracy to remove Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn is foiled * Rumi is composing *ghazal*s for Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn
654/1256	Rumi's dream of Medina—addressed to Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī
657/1258	Death of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb * Fall of Baghdad and the Abbasid Caliphate to the Mongols
c. 660/1262	'Alā al-Dīn, Rumi's elder son dies * Composition of the *Mathnawī* begins with Ḥusām al-Dīn
662/1264	Book Two of the *Mathnawī* begins (662 Hijrī) after some delay
670/1272	Rumi becomes a grandfather (Birth of Ūlū 'Ārif Chalabī to Sulṭān Valad and Fāṭima Khātūn, the daughter of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn)
672/1273	Death of Rumi
c. 673/1274	Followers disagree over succession * Sulṭān Valad affirms Ḥusām al-Dīn
683/1284	Death of Ḥusām al-Dīn * Sulṭān Valad assumes stewardship of disciples
690/1291	Sulṭān Valad composes his *Ibtidā-nāma* / *Valad-nāma*, the first account of Rumi's vita
c. 712-754/1312-1353	The period during which the legendary accounts of Rumi's vita were collected in Sipahsālār's *Risāla* and Aflākī's *Manāqib*

To the extent that any evolution or development in Rumi's writing has been presumed, it has been parceled out primarily by genre, with three phrases said to correspond to different phases in his literary career and religious/intellectual outlook:

◊ *First Phase*: A largely homiletic and pedagogical (*wa'ẓ* and *fiqh*) attitude, reflected in the formal sermons of his *Majālis-i sab'a*, to 642/1244.

◊ *Second Phase*: The composition of *ghazal*s and the performance of *samā'*, 642/1244 to c. 658/1260.

◊ *Third Phase*: The composition of the *Mathnawī*, c. 660-665/ 1262-1267.

The late Annemarie Schimmel suggested that this periodization stands in need of more careful and thorough nuancing, and indeed the present essay is a tentative and preliminary foray in that direction.

Beginnings and Endings

The first step would be to set, if possible, a *terminus a quo et ad quem* for the literary production of Rumi. Did Mawlana Rumi begin composing *ghazal*s, as our working schema presents, only with the appearance of Shams? Did he begin composing in the *mathnawī* (couplet) form only after the death of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, sometime around 660/1262, at which point, as has been the tendency to assume, he ceased composing *ghazal*s?

There are many clues within the text of the *Mathnawī* about the circumstances of its composition. For example Shams is not far from Rumi's mind, though Ḥusām al-Dīn is now his companion in spirit (M, 2: 1122-23):

mā zi 'ishq-i Shams-i Dīn bī nākhun-īm
var na mā īn kūr rā bīnā kunīm
hān Żiyā'u 'l-Ḥaq Ḥusāmu 'l-Dīn tu zūd
dāruv-ash kun kūri-yi chashm-i ḥasūd

I am declawed by love of Shams-i Dīn
or else would I restore sight to the blind
So you, Truth's Light, Ḥusām al-Dīn, cure him
and may it blind the evil envious eye!

The *Mathnawī* sessions were often held at night, lasting early into the morning (M, I:1807):

ṣubḥ shud ay ṣubh rā pusht u panāh
'udhr-i makhdūmī Ḥusāmu 'l-Dīn bi-khʷāh

Pillar and haven of the morn, it's dawn
Pardon me to my master, Ḥusām al-Dīn!

These sessions proceeded somewhat improvisationally, without a pre-set outline of topics to be covered (M, I:2934-38):

ay Żiyā'u 'l-Ḥaq Ḥusāmu'l-Dīn bi-gīr
yik-du kāghadh bar fazā dar waṣf-i pīr
garchi jism-i nāzuk-at rā zūr nīst
līk bī khʷurshīd mā rā nūr nīst. . . .
chun sar-i rishta bi dast u kām-i tu-st
muhra-hā-yi 'iqd-i dil z-in'ām-i tu-st
bar nivīs aḥwāl-i pīr-i rāhdān
pīr rā bugzīn u 'ayn-i rāh dān

O Light of Truth, Ḥusām al-Dīn! Let's add
a sheet or two, description of the *pīr*.
I know your subtle body has no strength,
and yet without your sun we have no light. . . .
You hold our thread of thought within your hand
Your blessings string our heart with meaning's pearls.
Write down the circumstances of the *pīr*
who knows the way. Choose this *pīr* and let him guide!

Splicing, Tampering, and Tapering of the *Mathnawī*

The *Mathnawī* has frequently been critiqued, even by its staunch proponents, as rather discursive and dilatory. Much of this frustration results from said critics' objectives of extracting or codifying his mystical theology, whereas the homiletic, meandering nature of the narrative, as well as the nuanced (not to say inconsistent) and situational nature of the teachings it contains, defy linear summation and pat codification. This might be dismissed as a modernist preoccupation, except that the *Mathnawī* itself, toward the end of Book Three, and therefore perhaps in about the year 663/1265 or so, gives voice to an external criticism of the *Mathnawī*, indicating that Books One and Two, or the early part of Book Three, must have by then been shared outside the proto-Mevlevi community. This

systematic Sufi critic of the *Mathnawī* is first ridiculed, but then allowed to state his objections, before being silenced with the wilting and rather grandiose remark that the people had also caviled at the Qur'ān. It is worth pausing to consider this passage, and to reflect how such criticism may have impacted Rumi's writerly consciousness as he went on composing the second half of the book (M, III:4232-36):

khar baṭī nāgāh az khar khāna'ī
k-īn sukhan past-ast, ya'nī Mathnawī
nīst dhikr-i baḥth u asrār-i buland
az maqāmāt-i tabattul tā fanā
sharḥ u ḥadd-i har maqām u manzilī
sar burūn āvard chun ṭa'āna'ī
qiṣṣa-yi payghambar-ast u pay ravī
ki davānand awliyā ān sū samand
pāya pāya tā mulāqāt-i khudā
ki bi par zū bar parad ṣāḥib dilī

> A great ass stuck his head out of the stable
> all of a sudden like a scolding hag
> "This work" (he means the *Mathnawī*) "is lousy![19]—
> the story of the Prophet, nothing new.
> It lacks debate and lofty mysteries
> the kind towards which the saints spur on their steeds
> from stations of ascesis to effacement
> up step by step to meet God face to face
> the explanation of each stage and station
> on which like wings the man of heart may soar."[20]

One might argue in its defense that, as a narrative structure, the *Mathnawī* possesses strong openings, whereas the endings are diffuse and often decrescendo, the parts stitched together with impromptu and excited segues that frequently nest one story within another, within yet another.[21] The composition sessions during which the book was composed also sometimes irrupt into the text (in rather homiletic, *majlis-gū'ī*, fashion), but these personal staging asides tend to make the text more present and lively rather than to disrupt. Book One begins not just strongly and distinctively, but uniquely. The Arabic prose prologue asserts a fairly large, even a stupendous claim: that the *Mathnawī* (a book full of retold secular stories,

[19] Note how the text is already known tout court, by the name *Mathnawī*, the pre-eminent example of the couplet form. See the discussion on the name in Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, p. 304.

[20] For a beautiful rhyming translation of this passage by Leonard Lewisohn, see H. Ghomshei's article in this volume: p. 5 above.

[21] For an alternate view of the narrative structure of the *Mathnawī* which proposes a hidden pattern in the text, see Simon Weightman's article in this volume, pp. 269-79, below.

juxtaposed alongside tales of the prophets and Sufi champions) conveys the inner interior essence, roots, or fundaments of religion and belief. The "Song of the Reed," or *nay-nāma*, that opens the poem is of course one of the most striking and metaphorically intricate passages of Persian literature. The hagiographical literature says that Rumi produced these lines from his turban, already written, when Ḥusām al-Dīn first suggested composing a long poem to him (this, c. 657/1260). Whether this be true or not, it indicates a historic memory (or a typological myth) of the forethought that went into the crafting of this beginning, so unlike the doxologies and praises of the Prophet and *mi'rāj* recitals that initiate most other *Mathnawī*s, including the mystical *Mathnawī*s of Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār that inspired Mawlana.

The Tapering Text

But what of its ending? The *Mathnawī* can jump across books with stories still in progress, returning to finish them, after a fashion, in the subsequent book, as in the case of the boundary between Books Three and Four. However, at the end, in the final Book VI (M, VI:4877-4902 and abruptly again at 4916), the narrative tapers off unfinished, mid-story. A man has three sons, and he wills that his wealth should be given to the one who proves to be the laziest (*kāhil-tar*)—"lazy" in Nicholson's translation, though perhaps the negative connotation of that word is strong for this context. The first two sons make their case for lethargy *in excelsis*, but a story about a mother trying to empower her child not to fear the bogey man interrupts, and the whole book abruptly ends, such that we do not learn the argument of the third son, or the climactic decision in the contest of lethargy, or indeed the denouement to the larger frame of the king warning his three princely sons not to visit the reason-robbing fortress (beginning M, VI:3583 and also never closed) in which this tale of competing lethargies is nestled. Is this unfinished business evidence, as some have speculated, that Rumi died while the poem was still in process? Or is it a deliberately sly commentary on ontological experience and the human condition (not all stories can have a conclusive ending)? Or does it simply mirror the fate of other ambitiously planned medieval poems that were left in an open or incomplete state (such as the *Canterbury Tales*, or the *Thousand and One Nights*)?[22] Or indeed, is Rumi claiming to be the most submissive of all

[22] Muḥammad Isti'lāmī, "Zīstan bā zamān" (Minding Time), in *Iran Nameh* 25, 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1388 A.Hsh./2009, and online http://fis-iran.org/fa/irannameh/volxxv/1-2rumi/mindingtime), gives an interpretation of the larger framing story of the three princes and the reason-robbing fortress (which Isti'lāmī proposes is not really left unfinished).

sons, so lazy he cannot be bothered even to conclude the tale of laziness? But this narrative interruptus is so striking that it was felt to be an embarrassment early on, such that a 54-line apology is appended to many older manuscripts of the *Mathnawī* to excuse it. This "conclusion," or *tatimma*, is penned by Sulṭān Valad, or at the very least, by someone adopting his voice and persona:[23]

muddatī z-īn Mathnawī chun vālid-am
shud khamush guft-ash valad: k-ay zinda dam
az chi rū dīgar ni-mīgū'ī sukhun
bahr-i chi bastī dar-i 'ilm-i ladun
qiṣṣa-yi shahzādigān n-āmad bi sar
mānd nā-sufta dur-e sivvum pisar
guft nuṭq-am chun shutur z-īn pas bikhuft
nīst-ash bā hīchkas tā ḥashr guft
hast bāqī sharḥ-i īn līkin darūn
basta shud dīgar ni-mīāyad burūn
hamchu ushtur nāṭiqa īnjā bi-khuft
ū bi-gūyad man zabān bastam zi guft
vaqt-i riḥlat āmad u jastan zi jū
kullu shay'in hālik illā wajhahu
bāqi-yi īn gufta āyad bī-zabān
dar dil-i ān kas ki dārad zinda jān[24]

Meanwhile, for an aesthetic theory of the *opera aperta*, in which the artist/writer calls on the viewer/reader to provide closure, and in which the authorial intent does not control or confine the interpretation of a work, see Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). Eco sees this, or at least applies it, primarily to modernist and avant garde works, but it may also be applied to medieval works with ostensible frames, such as the *Mathnawī* or *Thousand and One Nights*, or *Canterbury Tales*.

[23] There is at least one other example of this type of poetic conversation between Sulṭān Valad and his (in this case, deceased) father, Rumi, which occurs in Sulṭān Valad's long Greek poem (*Maytus āyus pūs dhikāsī lālisī* = Με τους άγιους πώς δοικάσαι λάλησε) in his own *Dīvān*, so there is an inherent paradigm for such a father-son dialogue in Sulṭān Valad's oeuvre. *Divanı Sultan Veled*, ed. F. Nafız Uzluk (Ankara: Uzluk Basımevi, 1941) and *Dīvān-i Sulṭān Valad*, ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī (Tehran: Rūdakī, 1338 A.Hsh./1959) and Dmitris Desdes, "Ποίηματα του Μαυλανά Ρουμή [Poems by Mevlana Rumi]," *Ta Istorika* 10.18-19 (1993), pp. 3-22.

[24] Text of the so-called "Tatimma-yi Sulṭān Valad" taken from *Mathnawī-yi ma'nawī-yi Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad-i Mawlāwī (az rū-yi nuskha-yi 677 h.q.)*, ed. Tawfīq Subḥānī (Tehran: Vizārat-i Farhang va Irshād-i Islāmī, 1383 A.Hsh./2004), 1035.

> When my father had remained silent for a while from the *Mathnawī*, the son ("Valad") said to him: May you long inspire us! (*zinda dam*). Why do you not continue to speak? Why have you closed the door of mystic knowledge? The story of the princes is incomplete. The pearl of the third son is unbored.
>
> He said: My speech, like a camel has lain down and will not speak with anyone until the resurrection. There is more explanation to give, but within (between the lines?). It's closed, nothing else is coming forth.
>
> Just like a camel, the power of speech (*nāṭiqa*) lay down right here. It is this power that speaks, I have stopped my tongue from speech. It is time for me to journey hence. *All things perish but the face of God*. The rest of these words will be spoken without sound in the heart of those who are alive in soul.

The testimony of Aflākī would, however, tend to undermine the notion that the poet ceased composing toward the end of his life, because he has Mawlana dictating a *ghazal* to Ḥusām al-Dīn on his death bed, while addressing a Sulṭān Valad very much distraught over the imminent demise of his father and unwilling to leave his bedside. According to the report given by Aflākī, Rumi wished to assure Sulṭān Valad that he felt well, and that Sulṭān Valad could go lie down, which he communicated in the impromptu form of *ghazal* 2039:

> *Raw sar binih bi-bālīn tanhā marā rahā kun*
>
> Go lay your head on your pillow, let me be alone

If Aflākī were right, this—and not the mother explaining away the bogey man—would be the last composition from the prolific pen of Mawlana Rumi, though as one goes further into this particular *ghazal*, its contents seem to correspond more closely to the period of Rumi's inconsolable grief after the final disappearance of Shams,[25] than to the final words of a dying man:

[25] Aflākī, *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*, ed.Taḥsīn Yazıcı (Tehran: Dunyā-yi Kitāb, 1362 A.Hsh./ 1983), pp. 589-90. The whole passage is translated to English in Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad-e

tark-i man-i kharāb-i shabgard-i mubtalā kun

Leave me to wander the night, laid waste, afflicted.

Confessions of an Old Poet

Perhaps Sulṭān Valad meant to relay in this appended epilogue (*tatimma*) to the text of the *Mathnawī* a real-life conversation he had with his father (though presumably not held in rhyming lines of *ramal*, as Sulṭān Valad presents it). Here Mawlana, or someone speaking on his behalf, straightforwardly explains the departure of his poetic muse, though he was still possessed of his health and faculties. It is, of course, also possible that Valad, responding to another poetry critic—real or assumed—was simply recalling something his father had said elsewhere, and fashioned from it an explanation that turned this textual defect into a moral virtue. Rumi had said in *Fīhi mā fīh*:

> At first when I began to compose poetry the motivation impelling me to do so was mighty (*awwal ki shi'r mīguftīm dā'iya'ī būd 'aẓīm ki mawjib-i guftan būd*). At that time it had its effects and now, when the motivation has slackened and faded *(dā'iya fātir shuda ast va dar ghurūb ast*), still it has its effects. It is the way of God on high to instill certain things as the sun rises, which shed much wisdom and bring about momentous effects. And during the setting of the sun, the things earlier instilled are still in place.[26]

The gift of poetry came from God, like prevenient grace, and must therefore be divine, like Revelation, bestowed by God and not willed by the poet, or composed and performed for selfish reasons. Thus the diminution of Rumi's output toward the end of his life is beyond his control. In another discourse recorded in *Fīhi mā fih*, Mawlana tells us that poetry was considered a disreputable profession among his people and that had he remained in Khorasan, he would never have taken it up, keeping to the ways of a conventional teacher, preacher, ascetic, and author. This attitude surely stems in part from the Qur'ānic denunciation (Q 26:224-26) of the Arab poets as misled and immoral, and emphasizes

Aflākī, *The Feats of the Knowers of God (Manāqeb al-'āreftn)*, trans. John O'Kane (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 402-04.

[26] *Kitāb-i Fīhi mā fih*, ed. Furūzānfar, p. 199.

that the beautiful language of revelation was qualitatively different from the words of the poets (Q 36:69 and 69:41). But beyond this, Rumi even claims a personal disgust at composing poetry, comparing it to plunging one's hands into the entrails of an animal. One does so not because he enjoys it, but because he knows his guests will enjoy the meal once the animal is gutted, spitted, and cooked:

> I compose poetry to entertain the friends who come to see me and save them from boredom. Otherwise what in God's name do I want with poetry? I am sick of poetry; nothing could be worse for me. . . . A man looks to see what goods the people of a given town need and will buy. That is what he buys and sells, even if it be the most despised of merchandise. I studied the learning of the day and took great pains to be able to offer precious, precise, and wondrous things to the erudite, the clever, and the seekers of truth who come before me. God Almighty willed thus. He gathered all that learning here and all the pains I took that I might be occupied with this task. What can I do?[27]

We may suppose that this statement reflects the anxiety of the professional preacher and juridically-trained scholar, explaining himself to colleagues who felt that it was a pity—or worse, a moral peccadillo—for a man of religious erudition to occupy his time with the composition of verse and the listening to performances of *samā'*. Sulṭān Valad, himself, was anxious to distinguish between the poetry of saints and worldly poetry, which suggests that even in the generation after Rumi's death and the visionary and homiletic achievement of his poetry, for some of the *'ulamā* at least, poetry and its performance remained under a cloud of suspicion. Sulṭān Valad argues that the poetry of saints is a gloss on the Qur'ān, as the saints have effaced themselves and act only through God's inspiration, moving across the page like pens held by the hand of God. In contrast, professional poets are not trying to show God, but to show off.[28]

[27] From discourse 16 in *Kitāb-i Fīhi mā fih*, ed. Furūzānfar, p. 74. Compare the translations provided by A.J. Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi* (London: John Murray, 1961 and NY: Samuel Weiser, 1972), pp. 85-86; and Wheeler Thackston in *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Jalaluddin Rumi* (Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1994), p. 77.

[28] Sulṭān Valad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, or *Mathnawī-yi Valadī*, ed. Humā'ī, pp. 53-54.

The Onset of Composition

Did Rumi really begin composing poems only after the arrival of Shams? Was it Shams who freed him of the sense of disgust for poetry? It seems hard to comprehend how anyone wholly lacking an inner disposition and aptitude for poetry could be so transformed as to churn out nearly sixty thousand lines of it, often extemporaneously (if we are to believe the *tadhkiras*), in a relatively short span of time between the age of thirty-eight in 642/1244, and his death thirty years later, aged less than seventy. As an aside, we may here dismiss the notion of automatic writing, which is sometimes still offered as explanation for Rumi's output, as unable to account for the repeated and clever wordplay, engagement with literary models and other learned feats of literary virtuosity that Rumi shows throughout his *Dīvān*. He must have been a broad reader and, we may suppose, at least occasional composer of verse before Shams.

Can we find textual evidence for this conjecture? In *ghazal* 2784 (beginning *dar jahān gar bāz jū'ī nīst bī-sawdā sarī*) Rumi almost seems to address a line to his father, while still alive, in Balkh, on his way from Marv and Herat to Baghdad:

> *chun tu dar balkhī ravān shaw sū-yi baghdād ay pidar*
> *tā bi har dam dūr-tar bāshī zi Marv u az Harī*
>
> Since you are in Balkh, set out toward Baghdad, O father
> So that you get steadily further and further from Marv and Herat.

At least this is a specific father from Khorasan, going toward Baghdad, and not the generic "*ay pidar / ay pisar*" (father/my son). But when we come to the *takhalluṣ*, it is in the name of Shams, and our hope that this line could be projected backward temporally to a time before 628/1231, when Bahā al-Dīn was still alive, is dashed—unless an older line has been incorporated in a newer poem, composed or finished after Shams has come to Konya.

And yet, poetry could not possibly have been absolute anathema to Bahā' al-Dīn in the visceral terms expressed by Rumi, since Bahā' al-Dīn would quote verses in his spiritual day book, the *Ma'ārif*: twenty-one and a half lines of verse, to be precise. Bahā' al-Dīn in fact says that he composed numerous lines of verse (*bayt-hā-yi bisyār*) in praise of God, and goes so far as to co-opt the poetic tradition *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* by claiming that all *ghazals* that have been composed (*gufta-and*) about the eye and brow and face of the beloved, are in reality praises uttered to

God.[29] Some of the Persian verses noted in Bahā' al-Dīn's *Ma'ārif* may indeed be his own; in the context of explaining that God is the best of beloveds, more faithful to his covenant, Bahā' al-Dīn adduces the following *miṣrā'*, or hemistich: *gar dūst budastī hama jā jāy nishastī*.[30] Rumi was certainly aware that his father either composed or had a soft spot for this line, because he employs an adaptation of it in one of his own *ghazal*s (*ghazal* 759): *halih chun dūst budastī hama jā jāy nishastī / khunak ān bī-khabarī k-ū khabar az jā-yi tu dārad* (Rejoice, for if the friend were here, he would sit here, there and everywhere / refreshed is the uninformed one who has information about where you are). Rumi himself must have been aware that his father did in fact appreciate at least some poetry.

Burhān al-Dīn, Rumi's teacher after his father's death (that is from c. 629-638/1232-41), was actually quite fond of poetry, and Rumi implicitly acknowledges Burhān's influence in attracting him to the poetry of Sanā'ī in a passage of *Fīhi mā fīh*.[31] In addition to Sanā'ī, Burhān al-Dīn also quotes from Khāqānī (d. 595/1198), 'Aṭṭār (d. 618/1221), Sa'd al-Dīn Kāfī of Bukhārā (fl. 618/1222 or earlier), Athīr al-Dīn-i Akhsīkatī (d. between 520 and 522/1126-1128), and Niẓāmī (d. 598/1202).[32] If his early teachers did not avoid poetry, but occasionally quoted it, it is difficult to believe that they dissuaded Rumi from its appreciation, or that he lacked all inclination for poetry before the advent of Shams.[33] Even in the formal sermons of the *Majālis-i sab'a*, thought to represent the earliest recorded stages of Rumi's public homiletic career, we find quotation of poetic verses. We must wonder then if Rumi did not have some practice in *ghazal* writing before suddenly unleashing a flood of poems shortly after Shams' arrival in Konya, and again in response to his departure.

If Shams unleashed Rumi's love for composing poetry, or introduced him to certain poems, some of this impressed itself on Mawlana only with a time delay. Shams quotes a line of verse in his *Maqālāt*, for example, as follows:

[29] Bahā' al-Dīn Valad, *Ma'ārif*, ed. Furūzānfar, vol. 1, p. 392.

[30] Ibid., vol. 2, p. 19.

[31] Rūmī, *Fīhi mā fīh*, ed. Furūzānfar, p. 207.

[32] Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq, *Ma'ārif*, ed. Furūzānfar, pp. 6, 10, 18, 46 and 53, respectively.

[33] Muḥammad-'Alī Muvaḥḥid, too, seems to call into question Furūzānfar's assertion that only after meeting Shams did Rumi compose any poems; see Muvaḥḥid, *Shams-i Tabrīzī* (Tehran: Ṭarḥ-i Naw, 1375 A.Hsh./1996), p. 173.

bi nazd-i 'aql-i har dānanda'ī hast ki bā gardanda gardānanda'ī hast[34]

> To every knowledgeable one's intellect it appears
> that where something's in motion, there is a Mover.

This appears echoed in three different forms in the *Mathnawī*, transposed of course, into *ramal* meter. In Book Three (M, III:4748) we find:

Bī tafakkur pīsh-i har dānanda hast ānki bā shūrīda shūrānanda hast

> Without thinking, every knowledgeable one admits
> That where there is something stirred, there's a Stirrer.

We find it restated in another form in Book Four (M, IV:153—*pas yaqīn dar 'aql-i har dānanda hast / īnki bā junbanda junbānanda hast* = so it is certain for the intellect of any knowledgeable person that if something's animated, there's an Animator) and again in Book Six, this time in the form of a question (M, VI:364—*chūn ni-mīdānad dil-i dānanda'ī / hast bā gardanda gardānanda'ī* = how can the heart of a knowledgeable person not know that with something in motion, there is a Mover?). Shams does not state the source of his quotation, but as it happens, it comes ultimately from *Khusraw u Shīrīn*, one of the famous romances of Niẓāmī. Did Rumi know the provenance? Was it a verse that circulated out of context among religious people as a proof-text for the Primal Mover? Or was Rumi aware of this verse because Shams had picked it out as a personal favorite? Or did Rumi himself stumble across it in a direct reading of Niẓāmī, only toward the middle 1260s? It is not, then, a simple question of whether Shams sparked Rumi's literary compositions, but rather to what kind of poetry did he call Rumi's attention, and was that attention always generated when Shams was present in Konya, or did some of this influence assert itself posthumously, as much as two decades after his disappearance? It is interesting to note that all three of the paraphrases of this verse occur in the middle to the latter half of the *Mathnawī*. Several other explicit mentions of literary texts (the *Shāh-nāma*, and *Kalīla va Dimna*, for example), occur from Book Three to Book Six of the *Mathnawī*. Well into the *Mathnawī* (M, V:1204) Rumi is urging his audience to read *Vīs u Rāmīn* and *Khusraw u Shīrīn*, though his attitude toward secular poetry is not unequivocal. In Book Four (M, IV:3463), Rumi warns against a belief in the morally transformative power of the ethical literary tradition.

[34] *Maqālāt-i Shams*, ed. Muvaḥḥid, pp. 81 and 406n.

Indeed, the *Shāh-nāma* and *Kalīlā va Dimna* are mentioned as works that some, in their rebelliousness (*'utuvv*), falsely suppose to teach morals like the Qur'ān. But this is an objection against secular poetry encroaching on the domain of spirituality—it is not an argument against secular poetry, per se. But it would also seem to indicate that Mawlana is seriously engaged in a reading, or re-reading, of these works in the middle of the composition of his own *Mathnawī*. And why should he not scour other literary works for pleasing tales to re-tale and reorient with a mystical moral, especially by the middle of the vast work that was the *Mathnawī*, when we may imagine he was most likely to begin running short of his own material?

There are some fifty poems in the *Dīvān* of Rumi that date to the period of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb (c. 645-657/1248-58), including wedding poems for Sulṭān Valad and Fāṭima Khātūn, and many initiation rituals for the adepts under Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's directorship. By contrast, while the *Mathnawī* is addressed to Ḥusām al-Dīn and often invokes him, we find relatively few poems that call upon Ḥusām in the *Dīvān*, only eight by my reckoning that overtly name him with some variation of his usual appellation: Ḥusām al-Dīn, or Ḥusām-i Dīn, or Ḥusām. There are an additional four poems, however, with the occurrence of the word "Chalabī," a Turkic honorific title, equivalent to "Sir." Since we know this to be a title or component of Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī's common appellation, these four poems could possibly be addressed to him, although we cannot entirely exclude the possibility that they are for some other gentleman Chalabī.[35] But they do seem to be addressed to a local inhabitant of Konya, one who speaks Greek and Turkish and Arabic, as these poems tend to be macaronic, blending Arabic and Persian, or Persian with Turkish words and Greek phrases.[36] I make out *Kali mera* (کالی میرا = *kālī mīrā* = Καλη μέρα)

[35] There are at least ten other Chalabīs mentioned at least once by Aflākī in *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*.

[36] The poems in question are one three-line *ghazal* in Turkish (#1982), and three macaronic poems, mostly in Persian with some Greek, Arabic and/or Turkish (#2264, #3049, #3191). One point worth remarking as an aside, is the Arabic line in *ghazal* 2264, a poem containing Greek phrases alongside *miṣrā'*s in Arabic, which contains an aside to a woman to bring cups (*kāsātī*) of *qahwa*, which we know today as the bean which wakes and sustains us through the day: coffee. However, since the Shadhiliyya Sufis in Yemen note the use of this stimulant (probably imported from Ethiopia) only from the fourteenth or early fifteenth century as an aid to stay up for the performance of nocturnal prayer vigils, and as Kātib Chalabī (Kâteb Chelebi) tells us, writing in 1676 or so, that *qahwa* qua coffee arrived in Istanbul only in the 1500s, it is most likely that Rumi's line references another type of dark liquid, a brownish wine, probably made from dates, like *nabīd*. The line in question is: *yā sayyidatī hātī min qahwatī kāsātī* (O my lady, bring some cups of wine).

"good morning," in one of them, but as the rest is all Greek to me, and as there are two quite different versions of the poem given in the Furūzānfar edition of the *Dīvān* and the Konya manuscript published by Tawfīq Subḥānī,[37] we will not dwell on it here, except to note that it invites a certain "Afandī Chalabī" (Chelebi Effendi) to come in, suggesting that this Chalabī disguises himself at times with black garments and cane, like a monk (καλόγερος [*kālūyirūs*]) and at other times like an Arab stranger (*gharīb-am 'arabī*), and that the speaking persona, presumably Rumi, has chosen silence, preferring to speak through this Chalabī. In the Furūzānfar version of the poem, the *takhalluṣ* of "Shams-i Tabrīzī" is provided, while in the other version (the Konya ms as published by Subḥānī) it does not occur.[38]

One curious Chalabī poem that is in Persian (with three *miṣrā'*s in Arabic), namely *ghazal* 3049 in the Furūzānfar edition, begins like this:

rubūd 'aql u dil-am rā jamāl-i ān 'arabī
darūn-i ghamza-yi mast-ash hizār bu 'l-'ajabī
hizār 'aql u adab dāshtam man ay khʷāja
kunūn chu mast u kharābam ṣalā-yi bī-adabī

It stole my mind and heart, the beauty of that Arab
There are a myriad of wonders hidden in his drunken glances
I had unending wisdom and manners, good sir
Now I'm drunk and undone, an advertisement for uncouthness.

The poem concludes in line 17 with an evocation of Shams of Tabriz:

khamush kih mafkhar-i āfāq, Shams-i Tabrīzī
bi-shust nām u nishān-i marā bi khʷush laqabī

[37] *Ghazal* #3191 in the Furūzānfar edition, *Kulliyāt-i Shams*, *ghazal* #3191, vol. 7, p. 62; and *ghazal* #3109 in the Konya MS. as published by Tawfīq Subḥānī, *Dīvān-i kabīr,* vol. 2, pp. 1309-1310, where the same poem is four lines shorter, without Shams-i Tabrīzī in the *takhalluṣ*, and with sometimes different readings, including no Arabic *miṣrā'*.

[38] My understanding of the Greek lines comes with gratitude from Roxani Margariti of Emory University (personal correspondence 16 September 2011), and through various published articles on the topic of the Greek lines in Rumi and Sulṭān Valad: Dimitris Dedes, "Ποίημματα του Μαυλανά Ρουμή [Poems by Mevlana Rumi]"; C. [Konstantinos] D. Mertzios, "Quelques vers grecs du XIIIe siècle en caractères arabes," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 51, 1 (1958):15-16; and P. Burguière and R. Mantran, "Quelques vers grecs du XIIIe siècle en caractères arabes," *Byzantion* 22 (1953):63-80.

Silence, for the Pride of the horizons, the Sun of Tabriz
Has washed with this good title, my name and rank from me.

This last line seems clearly to refer to the conscious decision of Mawlana to speak his *Dīvān* in the name of Shams. Since the *Mathnawī* in Book One seems to juxtapose Ḥusām al-Dīn and Shams al-Dīn at two points, as if the former replaces the latter (M, I:427-28 and M, II:1122-23, quoted above), we may assume that the same dynamic is reflected in some of the *ghazal*s composed, presumably, in the same period as these passages in Book One and Book Two of the *Mathnawī*. Do these Chalabī poems then reflect a theological or institutional concern of the first two or three years of the composition of the *Mathnawī*, that is to say from 1260 to 1263, about Ḥusām al-Dīn replacing Shams al-Dīn?

And yet, what then of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the immediate successor to Shams as we are told in the hagiographies—why does he not figure in this transitional discourse in the *Mathnawī*? Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn is mentioned overtly only once in the *Mathnawī* (M, II:1321), in a passage that sets him alongside Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq (M, II:1319-20 and 1323ff), and "Sulṭān," in this case presumably Rumi's father, Bahā' al-Dīn (M, II:1320), who signed himself *Sulṭān al-'ulamā* (King of the Clerics). This passage occurs in Book Two, which we know to have been written (from the internal evidence covered above) around 662/1264. Shams and Ḥusām al-Dīn too are noticeably absent from this passage, though both Shams and Ḥusām are mentioned in tandem earlier in this same book (M, II:1122-23), only two hundred lines earlier, and so cannot be long forgotten by Rumi when he comes to this passage in which he mentions Burhān al-Dīn, Bahā' al-Dīn, and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn—seemingly grouping Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn among Rumi's first teachers, rather than with Shams, or with Rumi's later disciples and successors.

Shams and Ḥusām, Sun and Sword

If *ghazal* 3049 is composed in the name of Shams, we may be left wondering who is intended by "the Arab" of the opening line, and why there are Arabic *miṣrā'*s interspersed in this poem, and how much significance should be invested in the word *chalabī*, which forms the rhyme of line eleven (that is to say, does the word appear because it is a likely match with the required rhyme, or does it bear greater significance, as the title of an individual we, the readers, are supposed to recognize)? If we recall that Ḥusām al-Dīn is of Kurdish background, from Urumiya, and that Rumi

quotes in his honor, in the introduction to Book One of the *Mathnawī*, a saying of his reputed ancestor, Abu 'l-Vafā-yi Kurdī (d. 501/1107): *Amsayt*^{u} *kurdiyy*^{an} *wa 'ṣbaḥt*^{u} *'arabiyy*^{an} ("I went to bed a Kurd and I woke up an Arab"),[39] we will recall that Rumi playfully saw Ḥusām al-Dīn as a Kurdish Arab, even though he was known as Ibn Akhī Turk, son, or descendant, of Brother Turk, "Akhī Turk" being a title likely derived from his family's history with one of the *akhī/futuwwat* guilds/orders in Konya. Thus, we know that the second half of line eleven of *ghazal* 3049 must probably refer to Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī, and we may speculate that the winsome soul who had gone off after money might even be Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Ḥusām's predecessor as director of the disciples:

darīgh dilbar-i jān rā bi māl mayl budī
va yā farīfta gashtī bi sayyidī Chalabī

Alas that the delight of the soul was inclined to money
Or else you would have been entranced by my Lord, Chelebi

This poem suggests that Ḥusām al-Dīn is now the appointed head of the community, because Rumi is effacing himself from that role through a transformative flood of the remembrance of Shams. It is a poem that hints at some tension between the station of Shams and of Ḥusām al-Dīn, as dedicatees of the poems of Rumi.

This tension will appear in other poems for Ḥusām. One poem describes a replacement for Shams al-Dīn in ambiguous terms, but does not name who is intended by this, other than alluding to the former Turk being replaced by an Arab, which, based on the imagery above, suggests that Ḥusām al-Dīn could well be the subject of *ghazal* 650:

ān surkh qabā'ī ki chu mah pār bar āmad
imsāl darīn khirqa-yi zangār bar āmad
ān turk ki ān sāl bi-yaghmā-sh bi-dīdī
ān-ast ki imsāl 'arab-vār bar āmad
ān yār hamān-ast agar jāma digar shud
ān jāma badal kard u digar bār bar āmad
ān bāda hamān-ast agar shīsha badal shud

[39] This, in apparent reference to Abu 'l-Wafā's untutored background and his sudden attainment of mystical learning. The same phrase is repeated by Aflākī, *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*, vol. 2, p. 737, at the beginning of his chapter on Ḥusām al-Dīn; see also O'Kane's English translation of Aflākī, *Feats of the Knowers of God*, p. 514.

bingar ki chi khʷush bar sar-i khammār bar āmad
shab raft ḥarīfān-i ṣubūḥī bi kujā'īd
k-ān mash'ala az rawzan-i asrār bar āmad
rūmī pinhān gasht chu dawrān-i ḥabash dīd
imrūz darīn lashkar-i jarrār bar āmad
Shamsu' l-ḥaq-i tabrīz rasīd-ast bi-gū'īd
k-az charkh-i ṣafā ān mah-i anwār bar āmad

That redcloak
who rose over us last year
like the new moon
has appeared this year
in a rust-colored dervish coat
The Turk you saw that year
busy with plunder
is the same who came this year
like an Arab
It's the very same love,
though in different garb:
He changed clothes and appeared again[40]
It's the same wine, though the glass has changed
See how happy he comes to the vintner's!
The night's gone—
Where are my morning partners in drunken revel
now that the torch lights up the portal of mysteries?
Seeing the Abyssinian age begin, the fair Greek disappeared
Today he emerges with great hosts of battle
Proclaim:
the Sun of Truth of Tabriz has arrived!
for this moon of many lights
ascends the wheeling skies of purity.

There are, in fact, two different versions of this poem in the *Dīvān-i Shams*, this one of seven lines (#650), and another of eleven lines (#639) in the Furūzānfar edition, whereas in the Konya ms. of the *Dīvān* they are

[40] As remarked by Shafī'ī-Kadkanī, *Guzīda-yi ghazaliyāt-i Shams*, p. 575 this line and the penultimate line, containing the word *rūmī*, appears to have inspired the very famous *mustazād* poem *har laḥza bi shiklī but-i 'ayyār bar āmad* which is wrongly attributed to Rumi (perhaps most widely in the popular song on the 1355 A.Hsh./1976 album *But-i 'ayyār* performed by the Iranian singer Gītī Pāshā'ī), a translation of which is given in Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, pp. 635-36.

both seven lines long.[41] Three of the lines worth remarking in the other version (Furūzānfar #639) further buttress the notion of a transmigration or transposition (the word *tanāsukh* appears) of the figures of Shams and Ḥusām, of the setting of Shams and the rising of the moon, or Ḥusām as the spiritual mirror image of Shams:

ay qawm-i gumān burda ki ān mash'al-hā murd
ān mash'ala z-īn rawzan-i asrār bar āmad
īn nīst tanāsukh sukhan-i waḥdat-i maḥż ast
k-az jūshish-i ān qulzum-i zakhkhār bar āmad
yik qaṭra az-ān baḥr judā shud ki judā nīst
k-ādam zi tak-i ṣalṣal-i fakhkhār bar āmad[42]
. . . gar Shams furū shud bi-ghurūb-i ū nah fanā shud
az burj-i digar ān mah-i anwār bar āmad

O folk who suppose those flames extinguished
That flame arises from this portal of mysteries
It's not transmigration, we speak of absolute unity
which bubbled up in the ferment of that raging sea
One drop separated from that ocean but is not separate
for Adam came to be from one clod of clay like the potter's
. . . If Shams/the sun went down, it did not pass away in setting
That moon of many lights rose up from another house

It is worth remembering here that Sulṭān Valad in his *Ibtidā-nāma* describes a luminous hierarchy of Shams as the Sun, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as the moon, and Ḥusām al-Dīn as a star.[43] If this simile stems from Rumi himself, then we perhaps have in the "redcloak" poem a description of the replacement of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, who was born in a village near Konya and worked as an artisan in that town. Was he the "Turk," who came out in a red cloak like the moon, but is now replaced by an Arab wearing a rust-colored *khirqa*? The final line reads:

Shamsu 'l-ḥaq-i Tabrīz rasīd-ast bi-gū'īd
k-az charkh-i ṣafā ān mah-i anvār bar āmad

[41] Tawfīq Subḥānī, *Dīvān-i kabīr*, *ghazal* #2455, vol. 2, p. 1032 (corresponding to Furūzānfar #639) and *ghazal* #2446, vol. 2, p. 1029 (corresponding to Furūzānfar #650).

[42] An allusion to Qur'ān LV:14, *Khalaqa 'l-insān^{a} min ṣalṣāl^{in} ka 'l-fakhkhār* (He created mankind from clayclods like the potter's).

[43] Sulṭān Valad, *Mathnawī-yi Valadī*, ed. Humā'ī, p. 113.

> Proclaim that the Sun of Truth of Tabriz (Shams al-Ḥaqq) has arrived!
> for from the (celestial) wheel of purity this moon of many rays ascends.

Has the moon disappeared, only to re-appear, in the cycle of Shams, Ṣalāḥ, and Ḥusām? When we then read lines such as this from *ghazal* 1579,

> *Shams-i Tabrīz zi āftāb-at*
> *hamchun qamar-īm mā chi dānīm*
>
> Shams-i Tabrīz, through your sun
> we shine just like the moon.
> And what do we know?

—it may require us to revise our assumptions about the addressee of the poem. Is this not a poem composed, not while Shams was present, but in his absence, one in which the speaking persona, speaking in the plural, may rather be Mawlana, with Ḥusām or Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as referent?[44]

Picking up the Sword

But let us return to Ḥusām al-Dīn. In *ghazal* 1377 Mawlana invokes Ḥusām al-Dīn as an absent presence, just as he often had done for Shams. It begins: *ay bā man u pinhān chu dil, az dil salām-at mīkunam* (You who are with me and hidden, like the heart, I give you hearty greetings). In this poem Ḥusām is asked to watch over the speaker from afar (2a = *har jā ki hastī ḥāżirī az dūr dar mā nāẓirī*), and the poem asserts (1b = *tu ka'ba'ī har jā ravam qaṣd-i maqām-at mīkunam*) that "you are the Kaaba, wherever you go, my goal is where you rest." This language, one would have thought was reserved for Shams were "Ḥusām al-Dīn" not the name invoked at the end. It also suggests the composition setting of the *Mathnawī*:

> *Shab-khāna rawshan mīshavad chun yād-i nām-at mīkunam*
>
> The dervish lodge lights up when I call your name (2b)

[44] Sulṭān Valad seems to suggest in the *Mathnawī-yi Valadī* that it is for Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, but this need not be taken as conclusive.

man āyina(-yi) dil râ zi tu īnjā ṣiqālī mīdaham
man gūsh-i khʷud rā daftar-i luṭf-i kalām-at mīkunam (7)

With you I burnish the mirror of my heart, here
I make my ears the book of your graceful words

It requires no great leap of imagination to suppose this poem dates to the interval during which the *Mathnawī* was interrupted, between Books One and Two, that is sometime c. 660/1262 to 662/1264. Recall that in the opening lines of Book Two of the *Mathnawī*, Ḥusām al-Dīn has been on a journey into the heavens, cooking his blood into milk, and (M, II:6-7):

Mathnawī ki ṣayqal-i arwāḥ būd
bāz gasht-ash rūz-i istiftāḥ būd
maṭla'-i tārīkh-i īn sawdā vu sūd
sāl andar shish-ṣad u shaṣt u du būd

The *Mathnawī* is the burnish of the spirits;
his return was the day of commencing.
The starting date of this commerce and profit
was in the year 662.

Rūz-i istiftāḥ, in addition to a generic day of opening/commencement, can also be particularly associated with the fifteenth day of Rajab, and if that is what is intended here, 15 Rajab 662 would be the precise date, that is 13 May 1264.

This same *ghazal* we have been discussing—#1377 = *ay bā man u pinhān chu dil*—closes with a gesture toward the discipleship of the addressee, and an assurance that even if you travel for years, you will return to me. The *maqṭa'* follows:

ay shah Ḥusāmu 'l-Din Ḥasan, mīgūy bā jānān ki man
jān rā ghilāf-i ma'rifat bahr-i ḥusām-at mīkunam.

O King, Ḥusām al-Din Ḥasan, tell the beloved that
"I am making my soul a scabbard of mystic knowledge for your sword."

A final poem for Ḥusām should be considered before closing, because it actually does contain a date, as did the *Mathnawī* passage mentioned above. This poem, *ghazal* 1839, seems to reflect composition circum-

stances not at all dissimilar to those of the *Mathnawī*. Indeed, the poem, we may speculate, could even have been a dry run for a story intended for inclusion in the *Mathnawī*, but was ultimately unsuited to that format. The poem is fragmentary, kaleidoscopic, and chaotic. It recounts a dream of historical significance, it tells an embedded story, and it calls upon Ḥusām al-Dīn not to fall asleep (apparently it is being related late at night, or at least alludes to a convention of late-night composition). The poem is long, and will be given here only in part, attending to those sections that are most important for our purpose:[45]

Wāqi'a'ī bi-dīda-am lāyiq-i luṭf u āfarīn
khīz mu'abbiru' l-zamān ṣūrat-i khʷāb-i man bi-bīn
khʷāb bi-dīda-am qamar chīst qamar bi khʷāb dar
z-ānki bi khʷāb ḥal shavad ākhar-i kār u awwalīn
ān qamarī ki nūr-i dil z-ū-st gah-i ḥużūr-i dil
tā zi furūgh u dhawq-i dil rawshaniy ast bar jabīn. . . (lines 1-3)

I have seen a vision, worthy of attention and praise!
Come, Mantic of the Age, see what form my dream assumed:
In a dream I have seen the moon
What does it mean in a dream, the moon?
For in dreams things are resolved—what has come and what will come.
It was the moon that lights the heart when heart feels mystery's presence
Such heart-bright sensibility spills out, illuminates the face. . . .

shab bugdhasht o shud saḥar khīz ma-khusb bī khabar
bī khabar-at kujā hilad shu'la-yi āftāb-i dīn. . . . (line 7)

Get up, don't be asleep and heedless!
—as if the rays of the sun of faith would leave you heedless! . . .

dar shab-i shanba'ī ki shud panjum-i māh-i qa'da rā
shish-ṣad u panjah u ham hast chahār az sinīn
hast bi shahr wilwila īn ki shud-ast zilzila
shahr-i Madīna rā kunūn naql kazh-ast yā yaqīn
raw zi Madīna dar gudhar zilzila-yi jahān nigar
junbish-i āsimān nigar bar nimaṭī 'ajab-tarīn. . . . (lines 10-12)

[45] A full translation is given in Lewis, *Rumi: Swallowing the Sun*, pp. 108-110.

On the eve of a Saturday, the fifth day of the month of Qa'da
It is six hundred and fifty, plus four more years
There is commotion in the city. What has happened? It's a tremor
It's the city of Medina! Now is the report amiss or true?
Pass by Medina, go beyond and see the quaking of the earth
Regard the movement of the heavens, their most strange manner. . . .

guft binih tu nīsh rā tāza ma-kun tu rīsh rā
khʷāb bi-kun tu khʷīsh rā khʷāb ma-raw Ḥusām-i Dīn (line 23)

Put yourself to enchanting sleep
Do not go to sleep Ḥusām-i Dīn!

Let us consider this strange poem more closely:

I have seen a vision, worthy of attention and praise!
Come, Mantic of the Age, see what form my dream assumed:

This poem opens with the term *wāqi'a*, suggesting a kind of dream or vision that reveals or predicts a true event. Dream interpretation was often practiced as a profession by individuals thought to have a talent or susceptibility for it (*mu'abbir*, here rendered as "mantic"). Based upon the address at the end of the poem,

Put yourself to enchanting sleep
Do not go to sleep Ḥusām-i Dīn!

—this opening address would also appear to refer to Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī.

The date given in the poem ("On the eve of a Saturday, the fifth day of the month of Qa'da / It is six hundred and fifty, plus four more years"), that is 5 Dhū al-Qa'da 654 A.H., corresponds to 24 November 1256 C.E. In June of 1256 (Jumādī al-thānī 654), basaltic magma erupted from the ground in the Harrat Rahat area between Mecca and Medina, causing increasingly strong and frequent tremors for four days, until finally a large earthquake shook Medina on the 5th of Jumādī al-thānī as people gathered for the Friday prayers. For two months after that (through most of the summer), volcanic eruptions spewed lava that came within eight kilometers of Medina itself. It spread as a red-blue river of two meter's depth, that brightly lit up the night sky for miles around, making it appear as if the sun shone on the Ka'ba at nighttime. Just a few months afterwards, in

an unrelated event, on the first of Ramadan (22 September), the Prophet's Mosque in Medina was destroyed by fire. In the same year the Tigris flooded Baghdad, the city of the Abbasid caliphate, which the Mongols would finally conquer about a year and a half later (in February of 1258). The rebuilding of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina was delayed due to the Mongol invasions. The cataclysmic imagery of Tatar armies (from lines not quoted here) in this poem evidently refers to the Mongol troops; the mention of Armenians may be because in Cilicia, the Armenian principality continued to be hostile to the Seljuq rulers.

If we assume this dream, and the poem that describes it, took place and were written down on the date mentioned in the poem, it would place Ḥusām al-Dīn in a nightly composition setting with Rumi two years before the death of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, which occurred on 1 Muḥarram 657/29 December 1258 (according to the date carved on his sarcophagus, which sometimes however marks the date of the erection of the cenotaph, and not always the date of death). The poem is not without ambiguity. But we may assume from it that the relationship of Rumi and Ḥusām did not begin from scratch when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn died, just as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's relationship with Rumi began, according to the hagiographies, before Shams arrived in Konya. The poem does not inexorably lead us to conclude that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn—being out of the frame of the poem—is out of the circle of disciples. Indeed, we have already suggested that one poem seems to describe Ḥusām as standing in the stead of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. However, if we recall that Sulṭān Valad describes Ṣalāḥ as the moon, and Ḥusām as the star to Shams' sun, the reference in line seven to the sun of faith (*āftāb-i dīn*), and in line three to "*ān qamarī ki nūr-i dil zi ū-st gah-i ḥużūr-i dil*"—the moon which illuminates the heart when the heart is present—may be enigmatic references to Shams and Ṣalāḥ and the impending intervention of Ḥusām in that relationship. Again, however, the internal evidence must be read against the *tadhkira* tradition in order for us to draw more biographical details from this intriguing and enigmatic poem.

Conclusion

In our calculus of chronology, we must solve quadratic occasions of multiple variables—those of the correct understanding of the poems and the reliability of the "details" that the *tadhkira*s provide. But evidence does await, embedded in the primary documents of Rumi's own poems and prose, as well as the texts of his teachers, Bahā al-Dīn, Burhān al-Dīn, and Shams al-Dīn, for those willing to do the hard digging to retrieve it

from the layers of the text and piece it meaningfully together. The above suggestions for a methodology with which to trawl the primary texts for chronological information does not even address one of the early theories—that Mawlana Rumi uses the penname (*takhalluṣ*) of *Khāmūsh* (Silence!) in the early poems before adopting Shams-i Tabrīzī as his *takhalluṣ*. Baldly stated, this seems a somewhat simplistic assumption, though it may yet prove fruitful as a way to group, if not exactly date, certain *ghazal*s together. Interpretive strategies sensitive to such possibilities may lead us to new readings, which had not been seen before, intersecting life events with the poems in a more historical way than the hagiographical vitae do. Although the information retrieved from trawling the poems and discourses may often prove tangential or circumstantial with respect to the construction of a chronology, as has been demonstrated above, there is much information to be mined from attentive readings of the primary source documents we possess from Rumi's lifetime. It will be necessary to first undertake such efforts and marshal all the potentially probative evidence before we can determine exactly how much of the oeuvre can be pinned down in time, or at least in periods, and how much that will affect our interpretation and understanding of both the poetic corpus, the teachings, and the man himself. This prolegomenon seeks to encourage this scholarly effort, and anticipates further studies of this nature.

The Revival of the Spiritual Dimension of the *Sunna* in Rūmī's *Mathnawī*

SHAHRAM PAZOUKI

In his *Mathnawī*, Rūmī complains several times of Muslims who out of misguidedness represent themselves as Sunnīs.[1] The question of who is a true Sunnī, that is, a genuine follower of the Prophet, is a crucial one for Mawlānā. However, his discussions in this respect do not concern the Shī'ite-Sunnī conflict. He uses the word *Sunna* in its technical Islamic sense, especially having in regard such theological topics as the vision of God and the notion of man's freewill.

Mawlānā defines a Sunnī as one who is a true follower of the Prophet's tradition (*Sunna*), in the fullness of its threefold dimensions, these being the Canonical Law of Islam (*Sharī'a*), the Sufi Path (*Ṭarīqa*), and the divine Reality (*Ḥaqīqa*). For Muslims who in modern times negligently portray themselves as those who would revise the Prophet's *Sunna*, it is very important to pay attention to Rūmī's efforts to demonstrate the true meaning of *Sunna*, which will be the focus of my study.

In its technical usage, the word *Sunna* is usually used in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). After the Qur'ān, the traditions of the Prophet or *Sunna*—his recorded words, actions, and silent assertions (*taqrīr*)—constitute the second main source of the practice of jurisprudence. According to Muslim jurists, the basic source for the *Sunna* is the *Ḥadīth*s (the Prophet's *dicta*).

However, according to the great Sufi thinkers such as Rūmī, this legalistic definition of *Sunna* is incomplete since it is confined to the exoteric *Sharī'a* dimension alone. The *Sunna* of the Prophet, as he himself mentions, has three hierarchical dimensions, namely, *Sharī'a*, *Ṭarīqa*, and *Ḥaqīqa*. The *Sharī'a* is the exterior dimension of Islam and denotes the revealed Law which establishes the outward commands and prohibitions of Islam. The *Ṭarīqa* is the interior or spiritual dimension of Islam, dealing mostly with the purifying of the heart by moral virtues and love. The *Ḥaqīqa* is the goal to which the roads of *Sharī'a* and *Ṭarīqa*

[1] I wish to dedicate this essay to Dr. Ḥājj Nūr 'Alī Tābandih (Majdhūb 'Alīshāh) who for the first time made clear to me the original meaning of the term "Sunnī" in Sufi works such as the *Mathnawī*.

respectively lead. In the words of the Prophet, "The *Sharī'a* is my words, the *Ṭarīqa* is my deeds, and the *Ḥaqīqa* is my spiritual states."[2]

One of the keys to understanding the *Mathnawī* can be found in the distinction that Mawlānā makes between the various parts of this trinity of *Sharī'a*, *Ṭarīqa*, and *Ḥaqīqa*. For example, at the beginning of Book V of the *Mathnawī*, he offers three examples to illustrate this trinity. The first example is that *Sharī'a* is like a candle showing the way, the *Ṭarīqa* like the wayfaring, and the *Ḥaqīqa* (the Truth) like the end of the journey. In his third example, he compares the *Sharī'a* to learning the science of medicine, the *Ṭarīqa* to regulating one's diet and taking remedies in accordance with the science of medicine, and the *Ḥaqīqa* to gaining everlasting health.

Thus, the comprehensive definition of the *Sunna* according to Rūmī is that a true follower of the *Sunna* of the Prophet, that is, the true "Sunnī," is one who puts into practice all three of its dimensions. In the course of the history of Islam, in contrast to the lawyers (*fuqahā*) who confined the *Sunna* only to the *Sharī'a*, many great Sufi thinkers such as Rūmī tried to reveal its forgotten spiritual—that is, *Ṭarīqa*—meaning. In this respect, Ghazālī's renowned *Iḥyā 'ulūm al-dīn* (*Revival of the Sciences of Religion*), which is one of the main sources that Rūmī drew upon for his *Mathnawī*, can be considered as an example of an earlier revival of this dimension of the *Sunna*.

Mawlānā poses the question of who is the true Sunnī in his *Mathnawī* since the issue of Sunnī orthodoxy in Islam was a crucial one for him. He reacted especially sensitively against the claims of those dogmatic theologians (*mutakallimīn*) who asserted that only their ideas represent true orthodox (*sunnī*) Islam. Rūmī makes direct reference to the Mu'tazilite rationalist theologians as being pseudo-Sunnīs who only pretend to be orthodox Muslims. Because of this opposition, many commentators of the *Mathnawī*—whether Shī'ite or Sunnī—conclude that Mawlānā tries to give reasons to support the Ash'arites as representing the true Sunnīs.[3] There are still contemporary scholars who, when they did not find Mawlānā's ideas in full agreement with Ash'arite theology, claim that he

[2] Although this famous *ḥadīth* is commonly used in Sufi literature, there is controversy about its authenticity. Sufi authors adopted it as a self-evident religious rule rather than relied on it as a clearly established *ḥadīth*.

[3] In addition to Sunnī theologians, most Shi'ite scholars consider Rūmī to be an Ash'arite thinker. The famous Iranian Shī'ite theologian Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1919-79) is a very good example of this attitude. He says: "Mawlānā Muḥammad al-Rūmī, the author of the *Mathnawī*, is, in his own way, an Ash'arite; but his deep Sufi inclinations give a different color to all the issues of Kalām" (*Understanding Islamic Sciences* [London: ICAS Press, 2002], p. 74).

is probably following Māturīdī theology,[4] which is intermediate between the Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite theologies.[5]

However, these ideas are not acceptable in Rūmī's view. According to him, the science of scholastic theology (*kalām*), whether Ash'arite, Māturīdī, or Mu'tazilite, is unable to afford man any deep insight into the truth of the mysteries of religion and the *Sunna* of the Prophet. Such theologians trust only in evidence gleaned from their corporeal senses and carnal reason and deny esoteric modes of knowledge. This is why Mawlānā did not even consider that the celebrated Ash'arite theologian, Fakhr-i Rāzī (d. 606/1209) had understood the spiritual *Sunna* of the Prophet, as he says in the following verses:

Andarīn baḥth ar khirad rahbīn budī
Fakhr-i Rāzī rāzdān dīn budī
Layk chūn man lam yadhuq lam yadr būd
'Aql u takhyīlāt-i u ḥayrat fuzūd

If reasoning could discern the way concerning this issue,
Fakhr-i Rāzī would be an adept in religious mysteries.
But since as the adage goes "whoso has not tasted does not know,"
his reason and imagination only increased his perplexity.[6]

In what follows, I will cite three different passages from the *Mathnawī* where Mawlānā attempts to show who the true Sunnī actually is.

The Vision of God

One of the main topics discussed in Islamic theology (*kalām*) concerns the possibility of having a vision of God. The Mu'tazilites strongly denied the possibility of seeing God with one's corporeal eyes. They believed that one may only have faith in the existence of God. In opposition to them, the Ash'arites, asserted with equal strength that God can be seen with one's corporeal eye, but only on the Day of Resurrection. Both groups cite

[4] The Maturīdiyya were a school of scholastic theology (*kalām*) named after its founder Abū Manāṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944). This school is considered to be the second most important Sunnī school after the Ash'arites.

[5] See for example 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Sirr-i nay* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī, 2005), vol. 1, p. 447; vol. 2, p. 845.

[6] *The Mathnawí of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí*, ed. R.A. Nicholson (London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1924-40; Gibb Memorial Series N.S.), V:4144-45.

as evidence certain Qur'ānic verses and prophetic narrations and both of them in their use of the term "vision of God" imply only vision of Him with the corporeal eye.

However, regarding the debate between them about the problem of the vision of God with the corporeal eye, Mawlānā criticizes both these groups. Like all the Sufi thinkers, he claims that God can only be seen with the eye of the heart.[7] In the second book of the *Mathnawī*, he thus says:

Chashm-i ḥiss rā hast madhhab i'tizāl
Dīda-yi 'aql-ast sunnī dar viṣāl
Sukhra-yi ḥiss-and ahl-i i'tizāl
Kh^{w}īsh rā sunnī namāyand az ḍalāl
Harki dar ḥiss mānd u Mu'tazilī'st
Gar chi gūyad sunniyam az jāhilī'st
Har ki bīrūn shud zi ḥiss sunnī vay-ast
Ahl-i bīnish chashm-i 'aql-i kh^{w}ush pay-ast
Gar bidīdī ḥiss-i ḥayvān shāh rā
Pas bidīdī gāv u khar Allāh rā

The sensual eye leads the Mu'tazilite,
    While Sunnites follow union's inner sight;
Mu'tazilites are slaves of outward sense;
    They act like Sunnites but it's mere pretence:
Mu'tazilites submit to sensual dominance,
    Their claim "We're Sunnites" is through ignorance.
The senses proper Sunnīs leave to die;
    They're led to God through wisdom's inner eye.
If bestial senses could see God, a herd
    Of cows and asses would see—how absurd.[8]

From the standpoint of Mawlānā, as Nicholson in his commentary on these lines underlines, "the real test of orthodoxy [i.e. to be *sunnī*] is *capacity* for spiritual vision; the so-called 'orthodox' who merely believe in it as an article of faith are little better than heretics."[9]

[7] In addition to some prophetic sayings, there are narrations from the Shī'ite Imāms that take a similar position to that of Rūmī. For one of the earliest of such sources, see the chapter on the denial of vision in the section on *Tawhīd* in Muḥammad Kulaynī's *Usūl al-kāfī*.

[8] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, II:61-65, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi, *Rumi: The Mathnavi: Book Two* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p. 7 (vv. 61-65), with some minor modifications.

[9] Nicholson's commentary on Book II:62-63, p. 236.

Differing Intellectual Capacities

Another instance where Mawlānā uses the word *Sunnī* to mean the spiritual tradition of the Prophet can be found in his discussion of the differences in the intellectual capacities of people. He emphasizes this in the subheading to the passage below, which reads:

> People's intellects differ in their original nature, (though) according to the Mu'tazilites they are (originally) equal and the difference in intellects arises from the acquisition of knowledge.

The first three verses under this subtitle illustrate this view as follows:

Ikhtilāf-i 'aqlhā dar aṣl būd
Bar vifāq-i sunniyān bāyad shinūd
Bar khalāf-i qawl-i ahl-i i'tizāl
Kay 'uqūl az aṣl dārand i'tidāl
Tajriba u ta'līm bīsh u kam kunad
Tā yikī rā az yikī a'lam kunad

You must hear (and believe) in accordance with the Sunnīs (that) the difference in (people's) intellects was original.
In contradiction to the doctrine of the Mu'tazilites, who hold that (all) intellects were originally equal,
(And who maintain that) experience and teaching makes them more or less, so that it makes one person more knowing than another.[10]

Freewill

The third instance where Mawlānā uses the word *Sunna* in its spiritual meaning occurs in the fifth book of the *Mathnawī* in regard to the problem of freewill.

The question as to whether man has freewill or his acts are created by God is the most controversial subject in Islamic theology and one which Rūmī raises in different parts of the *Mathnawī*. In Islamic theology the Mu'tazilites hold that man is endowed with freewill. In the opposite camp,

[10] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, III:1539-45; Nicholson's translation of the subtitle and the ensuing three verses.

the Ash'arites held that man is not free in his acts. According to them, the Divine will is all-embracing. It encompasses all events, including human acts.

In the first book of the *Mathnawī*, however, Mawlānā condemns the dogmatic theologians as a whole for interpreting the Qur'ān according to their own opinions while discussing the problem of freewill (*ikhtīyār*) and determinism (*jabr*).[11] In contradistinction to the Mu'tazilites, Rūmī suggests that one should interpret (*ta'wīl*) oneself before attempting to interpret the Qur'ān.[12] Again in the same place, he says that this mistake of wrong interpretation of the theologians is the result of the weakness of their intellect.[13]

He supplicates Imām 'Alī to interpret the *Sunna* correctly, something that the theologians haven't the knowledge to do. He begs him to say something of what he has seen in his heart.[14] According to Rūmī, the "unorthodox"—anti-Sunnī—view of the theologians results from their false view of God and man and their belief in the absolute incomparability between man and God. He likens the baseness of the foul interpretation given by the theologians to a fly perching on a blade of straw floating in a pool of ass's urine. The fly claims to be the skilled pilot of a ship propelling its raft over the sea.[15]

Rūmī's own position regarding human freewill, as he expressly states, takes an intermediate stance between the Ash'arite doctrine of absolute predestination (*jabr*) and the Mu'tazilite doctrine of freedom (*ikhtīyār*).[16] In the following passage from a subtitle in the fifth book of the *Mathnawī*, he gives a précis in prose to verses refuting the idea of Necessitarianism (*jabr*), declaring: "The reply of the Sunnī (orthodox) believer to the Necessitarian infidel (*jabrī*). . . . The *Sunna* is a road trodden by the feet of the prophets. . . . On the right hand of that road lies the desert of Necessity (*jabr*) where he (the Necessitarian) regards himself as having no power of choice. . . . And on the left hand of that road lies the desert of Freewill

[11] Ibid., I:1080-90.

[12] Ibid., I:3744.

[13] Ibid., I:3743.

[14] *Ay 'Alī ki jumla 'aql u dīda'ī / Shamma-i vā gū az ānchi dīda'ī*, in Ibid., I:3745.

[15] Ibid., I:1082-90.

[16] This position is similar to the Shī'ite standpoint enunciated by Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, who declared: "It is neither totally predetermined (*jabr*) nor yet complete freedom of will (*tafwiḍ*) but rather something between these two alternatives." This *ḥadīth* is recorded in all standard Shī'ite collections, such as Kulaynī's *Usūl al-kāfī* and Shaykh al-Ṣadūq Muḥammad ibn Bābūyah al-Qummī's *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*.

(*qadar*), where he (who holds that doctrine) regards the power of the Creator as overcome by the power of the creatures. . . ."[17]

Once more, in the third book of the *Mathnawī*, while discussing the same subject, Mawlānā mentions the word *Sunnī* in opposition to the Necessitarian or *jabrī* in the following verses:

> The Sunnī is unaware of the Jabrī's (mode of) glorification; the Jabrī is unaffected by the Sunnī's (mode of) glorification.
> The Sunnī has a particular (mode of) glorification; the Jabrī has the opposite thereof in (taking) refuge (with God).[18]

As it appears from Rūmī's usage of the word *Sunnī*, the word is applied by him in its original Islamic sense. His discussion does not concern the Shī'ite-Sunnī conflict. In the same way, by the term *Sunnī*, Rūmī is not referring to the Ash'arites, but rather he uses the term to refer to one who is an orthodox follower of the Prophet's tradition (*Sunna*) in all three of its dimensions. As a Sufi thinker, however, he emphasizes the *Ṭarīqa* dimension of the *Sunna*, because of its precedence over the *Sharī'a* dimension. Accordingly, his notion of the genuine *Sunnī* is a man of heartfelt vision, not one who is bound to sensual perceptions and biased by his personal opinions based on fanciful conjecture.

Among the many commentators of the *Mathnawī*, Akbarābādī is one of the few who has noticed Rūmī's particular usage of the term *Sunnī*. In his commentary on this verse cited above (*Mathnawī*, II:61), "The sensual eye leads the Mu'tazilite, while Sunnites follow union's inner sight," he states: "The common folk among the Sunnīs (*ahl-i sunnat*)—who are the exoteric theologians (*'ulamā-yi ẓāhir*)—believe in the vision of God in the hereafter but not in this world, whereas the elect among the Sunnīs (*khawās-i ahl-i sunnat*), who are the Sufis, believe in the vision of God both in Paradise and this world."[19] As evidence of their belief, Akbarābādī cites these two sayings of the Imām 'Alī to cinch his point: "I saw Him, then knew Him, then worshipped Him"; "I have not worshipped a God whom I have not seen."[20] Jalāl al-Dīn Humā'ī is one among few contem-

[17] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, V:2963-3021, subtitle of verses (Nicholson's translation).

[18] Ibid., III:1501-1502, Nicholson's translation.

[19] Valī Muḥammad Akbarābādī, *Sharḥ-i Mathnawī-yi Mawlawī*, ed. N. Māyil Haravī (Tehran: Nashr-i Qaṭra, 1383 A.Hsh./2004), II, p. 561.

[20] Ibid.

porary scholars of Mawlānā who has clearly shown this true meaning of *Sunna* in the *Mathnawī*.[21]

One can see this same definition of the term *Sunna* present in some of the other Sufi writers. When the great Sufi master Shāh Ni'matu'llāh Walī (d. 835/1431) advises the Shī'ites to "Choose the way of the *Sunnī*, because it is our religion" (*rah-i sunnī guzīn ki madhhab-i mā'st*), by the term *Sunnī* he means the "orthodox" following of the *Ṭarīqa* or spiritual way of the Prophet. In this line, he wants to show the forgotten *Ṭarīqa* dimension of Shī'ism to the nominal Shī'ites who had confined it to jurisprudence and theology. This is why in the next *ghazal* he says:

> I am not a deviant heretic (*rāfidhī*) but a pure believer and an enemy of the Mu'tazilites,
> I have the religion of my ancestor (the Prophet); after him the follower of 'Alī the *walī*.[22]

A similar sense of the word *sunnī* is also used by 'Aṭṭār in his *Memoirs of the Saints* (*Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*). He speaks of having respect for the entire family of the Prophet as a principle of being "a *sunnī* and of pure belief" (*sunnī va pāk i'tiqād*),[23] with exactly the meaning of "orthodox" (in Greek: *ortho+doxa*), denoting in this instance what Rūmī, 'Aṭṭār, and Shāh Ni'matu'llāh have called "Sunnī."

Conclusion

From the foregoing we can see that Mawlānā has tried to expound the comprehensive original meaning of the Prophet's *Sunna* in his *Mathnawī*. The question raised by Rūmī as to who is a true Sunnī is not a moot point: it belongs neither to the historical past nor is it a topic only suitable for academic research by scholars of his works.

It is unfortunate that in our times many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars should introduce scholastic theologians (*mutakallimān*), especially the Ash'arites and jurisprudents of their school, as being the sole

[21] Jalāl al-Dīn Humā'ī, *Du risāla dar falsafa-yi islāmī* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978), pp. 49-50.

[22] *Kulliyāt-i ash'ār-i Shāh Ni'matu'llāh Walī*, ed. J. Nūrbakhsh (Tehran: Khānaqāh-i Ni'matu'llāh, 1361 A.Hsh./1982), p. 689.

[23] Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār Nīshābūrī, *Tadhkirat al-awlīyā*, ed. Muḥammad Isti'lāmī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zavvār, 1372 A.Hsh./1993), p. 13.

representatives of orthodoxy (*sunnī*) in Islam. Likewise, a similar misunderstanding occurs among some Muslim lawyers (*fuqahā*) and clerics (*'ulamā*) who do not understand that their knowledge of Islam, that is, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), is only concerned with orthopraxy, namely the exoteric legalistic dimension of the *Sharī'a*. There are still other Muslim groups who, in Rūmī's words, stake claims to revive or reform the *Sunna* of the Prophet, while their approach is completely one-sided and biased.[24] However, instead of reviving it, they close, according to Mawlānā, the very open way of Islam.

In the last book of the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī indicates that the locks on the doors of spiritual realities which remained unopened by the prophets preceding Muḥammad were at last opened by the grace of the religion of Muḥammad. He goes on to say that all the tidings of the Prophet Muḥammad are "disclosure within disclosure within disclosure."[25] He repeats the word disclosure or "opening" (*gushād*) thrice—apparently referring to the openings of the dimensions of *Sharī'a*, *Ṭarīqa*, and *Ḥaqīqa*.

[24] Here, I should also mention that in addition to the above-mentioned *Sharī'a*-oriented group, there are still others, especially in the West, who consider Mawlānā to be only a sentimental poet uninterested in the practice of Islam. All of the aforementioned groups conveniently overlook the fact that Rūmī was a true Muslim who followed the *Sunna* of the Prophet in its totality, that is, he took account of all three of its three dimensions (*Sharī'a*, *Ṭarīqa*, and *Ḥaqīqa*).

[25] *Mathnawī*, ed. Nicholson, VI:174.

From Rūmī's *Mathnawī* to the Popular Stage

Iraj Anvar and Peter Chelkowski

In the story of "Moses and the Shepherd" in the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī,[1] a simple shepherd feels lonely and longs for the presence of his Maker. He is a humble man, who lives on the plain and desert tending his flock. His call to God springs from the simplicity of his thoughts and language. "O God, where are you that I may become your servant. I will wash your clothes, mend your shoes, comb your hair, kill the lice on your head, bring you milk, and kiss your little hands and rub your feet. Let me prepare a room for you where you may lay your head." This prayer, articulated in song, is overheard by Moses, who considers it a blasphemy and calls it "foolish words." He berates the shepherd as "depraved, not a real Muslim and an infidel." The shepherd is scolded by Moses not so much for his familiar tone in addressing the Almighty, but for his anthropomorphism in relation to God. Moses angrily explains to the shepherd that they need shoes and clothes because they have bodies, but God who is the sun and the universe does not need human garments. This is a fundamental principle of Islam and this is why Islamic art is un-iconic. This interpretation of the humble shepherd's sincere prayer psychologically destroys him and he runs off the plain and flees into the desert.

Moses returns to the celestial abode to be rebuked by the Almighty, who is very displeased with his treatment of the shepherd. God reproaches Moses by saying, "You have just turned away one of my faithful from me—your mission is to unite, and not to separate." He then sends Moses back to the shepherd to comfort him. Following the footsteps of the shepherd in the sand, Moses finds the humble believer in the middle of the wasteland and tells him the good news, "God gives you permission to worship according to the spirit of your heart. Your faith is the light of the spirit and you are saved." Although this tale was written almost eight hundred years ago, it has an eternal resonance that speaks to the contemporary world.

[1] Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, ed. Muḥammad Isti'lāmī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zawwār, 1384 A.Hsh./2005 [7th ed.]), "Inkār kardan-i Mūsā 'alayī al-salām bar munājāt-i shubān," II:1724-1819.

This story became the "warp" woven through the plot of a theatrical production (*ta'ziyih*) called *Moses and the Wandering Dervish*. *Ta'ziyih* is a term used for the Shī'ite passion play performed in Iran. With the exception of contemporary theater, which was introduced to Islamic countries along with other Western influences and ideas in the mid-nineteenth century, *ta'ziyih* is the sole form of serious drama to have developed in the world of Islam. *Ta'ziyih* re-enacts the passion and death of Imām Ḥusayn, son of 'Alī, and beloved grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad.[2] According to tradition, Ḥusayn was brutally murdered along with seventy-two of his sons, brothers, cousins, and companions, as he contested his right to the Caliphate. The bloody massacre took place in the sun-baked desert of Karbala, about one hundred kilometers southwest of present-day Baghdad on the Day of 'Ashūrā, the tenth day of the Muslim month of Muḥarram, in the 61st year of the Muslim era corresponding to October 10, 680 A.D. Ever since then, the Karbala tragedy has been considered by the Shī'ites as the greatest suffering in human history.

Rūmī had a great respect for Imām Ḥusayn and in Book Six of the *Mathnawī*, he describes how the Shī'ites of Aleppo mourn the Martyr of Karbala's death at the Gate of Antioch on the day of 'Ashūrā. In the *ta'ziyih* of *Moses and the Wandering Dervish*, the shepherd becomes a dervish who lives in the desert. The play opens with a whirling dervish ecstatically praising the Almighty and noting the presence of God in all of creation, "Whatever is manifest in existence is the reflection of your beauty." The dervish lives as a hermit in the desert and devotes his days and nights to prayer and reflection and has very little contact with the misery and destitution of the outside world. He seeks to unite himself totally to his Maker and to discover evidence of the divine in all things on earth. He readily accepts the glories of creation as proof of God's splendor and power, but has a harder time reconciling the reality of human suffering with God's goodness.

As the dervish finishes whirling and singing his hymn, he sits down on a sheepskin and composes himself to mystically commune with his Maker. Quoting several passages from the *Dīvān-i kabīr* of Rūmī, the humble hermit speaks of his desire to be one with God and to leave the world behind for his true home in Heaven. He falls asleep while meditating on the search for the truth. He dreams of Paradise, but also has a

[2] Peter Chelkowski, *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran* (New York: NYU Press, 1979). This is the most comprehensive book on *ta'ziyih* to date in English. Another important work on *ta'ziyih* is Peter Chelkowski, "From Karbala to New York: *Ta'ziyeh* on the Move," *The Drama Review* (Winter 2005), T188.

terrifying vision of Hell which causes him to wake, confused and upset: "O Lord, what a dream. I saw Hell, woe, a man was burning there." The dervish is so disturbed by his vision that he decides he must flee deep into the desert away from all distractions to try to understand it. There in the wilderness away from the proximity of human habitation he may confront God with his questions.

Having made his journey into the heart of the wasteland, the dervish cries out to God for an explanation. He acknowledges his own insignificance and extols the perfection of the Almighty, yet is unable to reconcile the existence of Hell and its torments with everything that he associates with a compassionate Creator. The idea of a merciful and at the same time judgmental God so offends the soul of the dervish that he feels himself to be suffering the same pains as the condemned: "My soul is on fire because of this heart-burning scar. Come, take my body and burn it instead of your subjects."[3] The dervish is eventually overcome by the spiritual, emotional, and physical distress engendered by the awareness of the seeming contradiction he has discovered in his Creator. Finally, only able to incoherently murmur, "He is God, He is God" (*Hū Allāh*, *Hū Allāh*), the dervish falls to the ground unconscious.

From Heaven, pity is taken on the poor dervish. God commands the angel Gabriel to send Moses down to earth to comfort the distraught Sufi and bring him back to the path of truth and knowledge. Upon Moses' arrival in the desert, the dervish regains his senses and questions his visitor as to his identity. When he learns that his guest has been sent by the Almighty, the dervish abases himself and begs Moses to help him solve the horrible perplexity of his dream, "If the name of our God is Merciful, then why did he create fire and inferno?" Moses begins by asking the hermit to be calm and to accept that there is no mistake in God's plan of creation. The dervish does not agree with Moses' explanations, however, and incessantly repeats his question. Moses is affronted by what he regards as blasphemy and loses his patience. The discussion degenerates into a heated quarrel which ends with the dervish crying out, "Tell Him to either take the name of Merciful off Himself or to erase Hell from existence." At this outburst, Moses becomes so angry that he knocks the dervish to the ground and departs in fury.

[3] Iraj Anvar and Peter Chelkowski, "If You are Merciful, O Bounteous One, Full of Compassion, Why Make Hell, Punishment, and the Need to Account for Each Action?" in Alma Geise and J.-C. Bürgel, eds., *Gott ist schön und Er liebt die Schönheit, God is beautiful and He loves beauty* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1992), pp. 111-29.

The dervish is now utterly despondent. He fears that if he has angered Moses, he may also face the wrath of his Creator. Yet, he clings to his faith and begs God to have pity on him and to soothe his distress. His prayer is answered. Moses is reprimanded for his actions. The angel Gabriel tells him:

> O Moses, God commands you with reproach: "Go now and treat my worshiper with love." / I did not tell you to break his heart with anger. I told you to call him back to us with compassion. / Go and bestow upon him the balsam of our generosity. Give for his heart the balsam which is the story of Karbala.[4]

A chastened Moses hurries back to the desert and to meet the dervish in a spirit of love and compassion. Upon his arrival, he consoles the dervish and promises that he has an answer to his question. Through the power of a flashback, "he opens his two fingers in front of the dervish's eyes," and shows him the tragedy of Karbala. As the bloody battle unfolds before his eyes (it could be a full-scale *ta'ziyih* being performed or simply a file of the blood-stained martyrs of Karbala passing by), the dervish now comes to understand the reason for a place of everlasting punishment. He tells Moses that he now agrees with him and declares, "Even a thousand Hells filled with fire a thousand times over, would not be enough for such people."[5] This corresponds to the Mu'tazilites' understanding of man's moral freedom and responsibility for his actions: God is just and good; man alone is responsible for evil. If man were not morally free, the Mu'tazilites argue, the merciful and compassionate God would be the cause of evil—a concept which is impossible.

A great number of verses from the *Mathnawī* are found in the text of this play. The Iranian *ta'ziyih* play, *Moses and the Wandering Dervish*, variously known as *The Dervish of the Desert* (*Darvīsh-e biyābānī*), is usually performed as a prologue to another *ta'ziyih*, rather than being staged on its own as an independent play.[6]

An average *ta'ziyih* production lasts for three hours. With a prologue it may stretch to four hours. The prologue is called *pīsh-vāqi'ih* and the main body of the play is called *vāqi'ih*. The majority of *ta'ziyih*s do not have a *pīsh-vāqi'ih*. *Moses and the Wandering Dervish* is a very important *pīsh-vāqi'ih* as it is performed as the overture to major Muḥarram plays

[4] Anvar and Chelkowski, "If You are Merciful," p. 125.

[5] Ibid., p. 127.

[6] In Gilan, however, it is sometimes performed independently, and even in the evening.

such as *The Martyrdom of Ḥusayn*, *The Martyrdom of the Standard Bearer Abbās*, *The Martyrdom of 'Alī Akbar*, and *The Martyrdom of Qasan, the Groom*. *Ta'ziyeh* is a musical drama, the protagonists sing their parts, and the antagonists recite theirs. It is theater-in-the-round: the central performance area is surrounded on all sides by spectators who in a way are performers as well. Sometimes the action spills over into the audience and even beyond the audience. In *Moses and the Wandering Dervish*, paradise may be staged on a balcony, on the flat roof of a house, or in a tree. Hell is represented by devils, half-naked men smeared with blacking who lead chained souls with fire burning on their heads. The devils whip the souls in their charge and moaning fills the air.

This *pīsh-vāqi'ih* of *Moses and the Wandering Dervish*, which was the first *ta'ziyih* performed in the Western world and the first production staged in the U.S.A., took place in the spring of 1988 at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. There was a well-founded fear that *ta'ziyih* staged outside of the community of Shī'ite believers would be a total flop, but it turned out to be a great success. The built-in dramatic functions of *ta'ziyih* triumphed over any religious and political reservations. The only *ta'ziyih* hand in the Trinity College production was its director, Muḥammad B. Ghaffari. The rest of the cast were professional performers and students from the college. The cast was a very interesting ethnic, religious, and national mix. The role of the dervish was performed by a Korean dancer, Du-Yee Chang; that of Moses, by an African American basso, Bruce Butler; and the role of the Angel was sung by Abigail Booth, an American gospel singer. Rūmī had a vision of a world without boundaries, and this cast was very much in accordance with his ideal of the world.

Following the *ta'ziyih* tradition of adding and removing lines from the text, the director augmented the text of *Moses and the Wandering Dervish* as much as possible with Rūmī's poetry. In this way, it was principally a Sufi play inspired by Rūmī's story of *Moses and the Shepherd*. Yet it was also a modern production about the oppressor and the oppressed. The story of victimization is updated at the crucial point of the play when Moses opens his two fingers in front of the dervish's eyes. The dervish sees not only the beheading of Imām Ḥusayn, but also a subsequent scene showing the national South Vietnamese police chief Brigadier General Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a suspected Viet Cong guerrilla at point-blank range on February 1, 1968. This tableau is followed by the execution of a pregnant woman whose only crime was to be pregnant out of wedlock.[7]

[7] Milla Cozart Riggio, "Moses and the Wandering Dervish, Ta'ziyeh at Trinity College," *The Drama Review* (Winter 2005), T188, pp. 100-112.

In 2002, the New York Lincoln Center Festival presented three *ta'ziyih* plays at a huge circus tent in Damrosch Park, located at the southwest corner of the Center. The production used a professional cast brought from Iran and in a way was a tribute to Rūmī's story of *Moses and the Shepherd* which triggered an interest in *ta'ziyih* in the western world (France, Italy, and the U.S.).[8]

Another *ta'ziyih* associated with Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī is that of *Manṣūr Ḥallāj, Shams of Tabriz, and Mullā of Rūm*,[9] a relatively recent addition to the *ta'ziyih* repertoire which appears to have been performed for the first time in the twentieth century. It also seems to be the only *ta'ziyih* to bring together the three historical characters mentioned in the title. While Shams-i Tabrīzī (d. 646/1248), Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's master, was his contemporary, the other revered mystic in the cast, Manṣūr Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), lived some three hundred years before the other two, yet in this play he is also portrayed as their contemporary.

Rūmī's father Bahā' Walad (d. 628/1231) occupied a high position among Konya's scholars and was given the title, "The Sultan of the Men of Knowledge." After his death, Rūmī, who was just 24 at the time, was given his father's position and soon was recognized as a respected doctor of the law. However, like his father, Rūmī was also an accomplished Sufi. In 1244 an eccentric personality, Shams al-Dīn of Tabrīz, came to Konya and had a great impact on Rūmī's life. William C. Chittick writes,

> Shams-i Tabrīzī's influence upon Rūmī was decisive, for outwardly he was transformed from a sober jurisprudent to an intoxicated celebrant of the mysteries of Divine Love. One could say that without Shams, there would have been no Rūmī. Nevertheless one must not overestimate the role that Shams played, since Rūmī was already an accomplished adept when Shams arrived on the scene. It is true that Shams may have guided him to the

[8] Nigel Redden, "Presenting *Ta'ziyeh* at the Lincoln Center," *The Drama Review* (Winter 2005), T188, pp. 124-25.

[9] In this *ta'ziyih*, Rūmī appears as "Mullā of Rūm." Mullā means "a learned judge, a master of jurisprudence." Rūm here means Byzantium or the eastern Roman Empire. Mullā of Rūm in the text means Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. This *ta'ziyih* belongs to the Cerulli Collection of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana and is recorded under the number 721. It was translated into French by A.G. Ravan Farhadi of the Sorbonne and was published in *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* (1955), no. 23, p. 70. The first translation into English was that of Dr. Mehdi Soraya in 1977. A fully annotated English translation used for the writing of this chapter is forthcoming from Iraj Anvar.

realization of certain stations of perfection to which he had not already gained access.[10]

Ḥallāj was one of the most famous mystics, known as the "martyr of mystical love," so it is therefore understandable how the author of this *ta'ziyih* wanted to connect one famous Sufi with two others.

The drama begins with a rapturous song of praise in which Ḥallāj proclaims his love of God and his oneness with the Creator. As a true mystic, he desires that his own self be abandoned and God be made manifest through him: "Since I have abandoned the self, the Beloved is manifesting Himself in me. / Whatever you see is false but God; God is the rose and the rest are thorns." In Sufism, this is known as annihilation in God (*fanā' fi-Allāh*). But it is Ḥallāj's claim, *Anā'l-Ḥaqq* (I am God, the Truth) which most disturbs the local jurist who understands only the outward letter of exoteric Islamic religious law (*mutasharri'*). This law-giver considers the words of Ḥallāj to be blasphemous and denounces the mystic to the Mullā of Rūm. The Mullā orders that Ḥallāj be brought to him for judgment.

During interrogation by the Mullā, Ḥallāj reasserts that he is one with God: "My religion is God, the divine Truth (*Ḥaqq*) and God (*Ḥaqq*) is my name. Anything other than God (*Ḥaqq*) is nothing but shame. Nothing is manifested in this body but God (*Ḥaqq*). You are in the presence of God (*Ḥaqq*)." The Mullā quickly condemns Ḥallāj to be hanged and the sentence is carried out immediately. Before the lifeless body of Ḥallāj can be carried away, however, blood from his throat spills to the ground and forms the words *Anā'l-Ḥaqq*. The Mullā is deeply upset by this ominous portent. With pounding heart, he collects the blood in a small vial and takes it home to hide in a safe place.

Upon arriving at home, the Mullā puts the bottle on a special shelf for safekeeping and tells his family that it contains a lethal poison. The following day all the members of the household, with one exception, leave for a day of festivity in the country. The Mullā's paralyzed daughter is locked in the house and left behind. Left alone, she gives in to despair and decides to drink the lethal liquid in the bottle and end her suffering. "I shall drink the poison hidden in that bottle. It will cause my soul to depart from my body. God willing, I shall drink this poison and will be relieved from the torments of this world." Upon drinking the contents of the bottle, the daughter is completely cured.

[10] *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany: SUNY, 1983), p. 3.

Meanwhile, the Mullā's wife feels sorry for her afflicted daughter and decides to return home to comfort her. When the family arrives back at the house, a beautiful stranger greets everyone. It takes several minutes before the parents realize that it is in fact their daughter who is speaking to them. As she recounts how she drank the poison, the Mullā realizes that the blood of Ḥallāj contains miraculous properties and that Ḥallāj himself must truly have been innocent. Some time afterwards, the daughter realizes that she has not only been inexplicably cured, she has also become unaccountably pregnant. She reveals her secret to her parents who counsel her to disclose her condition to no one. The daughter gives birth to a boy who is named Shams for the light of knowledge and goodness that radiates from his face.

Time passes, and Shams grows up. He appears one day in the school where the Mullā is teaching Islamic sciences. Shams sings a poem in praise of God which greatly impresses the Mullā who asks the young mystic to impart hidden knowledge to him. Shams begins by throwing the Mullā's book into the river and then miraculously retrieving it dry and undamaged. His action is symbolic as he wishes to show the Mullā that the mystic's innate, spiritual communion with God is a deeper and more profound type of knowledge than the theoretical teaching derived from tomes on religious law. At no time does the Mullā display any recognition of the fact that Shams is his grandson.

Before accepting the Mullā as his disciple, Shams makes him undergo several tests. This is typical of the Sufi path, in which the adept must strengthen his faith in the master and prove himself to his spiritual guide. Shams miraculously extricates the Mullā from several perilous situations and finally orders him to follow him across the sea by walking on the water. The Mullā nearly drowns because he disobeys Shams' instructions. From this experience, he learns to put complete faith in the master and to follow him without question. Shams promises him that eventually he will be able to walk the path himself: "Wait until the day that your thought and imagination spreads its wings and flies away."

A similar story is told by Ḥājj Ni'matu'llāh Jayḥūnābādī in his *Shāhnāma-i ḥaqīqat*,[11] whose "Story of Manṣūr" follows the basic plotline of the *ta'ẓiyih* of *Manṣūr Ḥallāj, Shams of Tabriz, and Mullā of Rūm* with a few variations. The "Story of Manṣūr" is written in a verse style that imitates that of Rūmī's *Mathnawī*. The author has also incorporated

[11] Ḥājj Ni'matu'llāh Jayḥūnābādī, *Shāhnāma-i ḥaqīqat* (*Tā'rīkh-i manẓūm-i buzurgān-i Ahl-i Ḥaqq*) (Tehran and Paris: Department d'Iranologie de L'Institut Franco-Iranian, 1966).

adaptations from other Persian mystical poems. Although the author was not a literary master, it is clear that he was quite knowledgeable about Sufism and mysticism in general. Jayḥūnābādī's "Story of Manṣūr," opens with Manṣūr's proclamation: *Anā'l-Ḥaqq*. As in the *ta'ziyih*, he is condemned for blasphemy. His accusers first try to kill him by stoning, but he miraculously survives. They try to hang him and then to shoot him with arrows, but he still resists death. Finally, he is burned and his ashes are thrown in the river. Throughout the entire time he is tormented, he continues to proclaim: *Anā'l-Ḥaqq*, and even after his ashes have mingled with the water, his voice continues to be heard from the river. The Mullā of Rūm goes to the river with a bottle and captures Manṣūr's ashes it in at which point the voice falls silent.

The Mullā takes the bottle home and tells his daughter that it contains a lethal poison. Subsequently, she is afflicted by a terrible stomach ailment and remembers the forbidden bottle. She swallows the ashes of Manṣūr and is cured. She also becomes pregnant. When the townspeople learn of her pregnancy, they insist to the Mullā that she be stoned for her sin according to the law. The daughter tells the Mullā how she conceived and he realizes that the power of God is at work. He tells her to wait for the child in a spirit of rejoicing. She gives birth to a boy whose light fills the whole house and surrounding neighborhood.

The Mullā takes the child and places him in a wooden box filled with jewels and floats it away in a stream. A gardener in another town finds the treasure chest and takes the child home to be raised by a kind nurse. As the child grows he is named Shams because his radiance rivals the sun. Shams is exceptional in every way and possesses the mystic's true sense of self. One day he questions the gardener as to his origins. After hearing the gardener's account of his discovery in the stream, Shams remembers his past life and realizes that he is the same soul as Manṣūr. He takes fond leave of the gardener and travels to Baghdad to meet the Mullā. Shams relates everything that has occurred to the Mullā and his family. All are overjoyed to see Shams and the Mullā becomes his devoted student.

In the twentieth century, several playwrights wrote about Ḥallāj, including an Iranian, Khujasta Kiyā, and an Egyptian, Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr. A Turkish playwright, Salih Zeki Aktay, also wrote a five-act play, *Hallac-i Manṣūr*.

* * *

Rūmī appeals equally to the cognoscenti and the average person in the street, as it were. Be it by reading his texts, listening to a recitation of his

poetry, hearing his verses in song, watching the whirling dervishes, or seeing his ideas come to life on the popular stage, Rūmī's mastery touches all who come in contact with his work. His perceptions of the human condition remain as relevant today as they were nearly 800 years ago.

PART IV

Designs of Love: Sense and Structure in Rūmī's *Mathnawī*

Open Heart Surgery: The Operation of Love in Rūmī's *Mathnawī*[1]

Alan Williams

Rūmī is known as the *quṭb* or "pole" of love amongst the Sufis. The English word "love," has two principal associations: sentimental and sexual love. There are, of course, also several other senses, including the ancient, Platonic/Socratic sense of love as *erōs* as explained by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*, and the altruistic, Christian *agapē*:[2] but these have become secondary, specialized meanings in modern culture. The sense in which Rūmī uses the Arabic/Persian word *'ishq* ("love") in the *Mathnawī* is different again from the above. His usage is part of the Khurāsāni Sufi tradition that can be traced at least as far back as Bāyazīd Bisṭāmi (d. 260/874) and is continued by Abu'l-Ḥasan Kharaqānī (d. 425/1034) and Abū Sa'īd ibn Abi'l-Khayr (d. 440/1049), through Aḥmad Ghazālī (d. 520/1126) and to Rūmī's own immediate predecessors Abū'l-Majd Majdūd Sanā'ī (d. 525/1130-1) and Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d.c. 618/1221). It is understood as a passionate, human love, yet one which goes beyond all forms and limitations of sensual experience to be a divine love. The *Mathnawī* begins by expressing the nature of this passionate love in one of the verses of its opening "Song of the Flute" (*Naynāma*):

> *nay ḥadīth-i rāh-i purr khūn mīkunad*
> *qiṣṣahā-yi 'ishq-i majnūn mīkunad*
>
> The reed tells of the road which runs with blood;
> it tells the tales of Majnūn's passionate love.

This verse is itself reminiscent of a verse cited by Aḥmad Ghazālī in the opening section of his *Risāla-yi Savāniḥ*:[3]

[1] All translations are by the author, and all citations from the *Mathnawī* are from the edition of M. Isti'lamī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zavvār, 1384 A.Hsh./2005 [7th ed.]), 7 vols.

[2] For example in I Corinthians 13.

[3] Shaykh Aḥmad Ghazāli, *Risāla-yi savāniḥ va risāla-yi dar mu'iẓa*, ed. J. Nūrbakhsh (Tehran: Khānaqāh-i Ni'matu'llāhī, 1352 A.Hsh/1973), p. 4, quoting from the *Dīvān al-*

wa lau dāwāk kull ṭabīb ins
bi-ghayr kalām laylā mā shifākā

However kindly doctors may treat you
without the words of Laylā you'll not be cured.

To which he adds a continuation of the quotation,

idhā mā ẓama'tu illā rīqihā
ja'ltu al-mudāma minhu badīlan

Whenever I feel thirsty for her saliva
I use wine instead.

wa-ayna al mudāma min rīqihā
wa-lākin u'allil qalban 'alīlan

Where is the wine to be compared to her saliva?
At least it soothes an ailing heart.

I mean by the title "Open Heart Surgery" that I understand that the *Mathnawī* was intended to have the effect of inducing in the reader, through contemplating the text, a reparation of the heart (Persian *dil*, Arabic *qalb*). In this metaphor I am venturing to suggest that, for the original, adept Sufi reader, the *Mathnawī* was a procedure as deliberate as the surgeon's operation on the heart. In strict terms, this may not be an academic topic, but it is surely the case that the question that underlies it is present in much writing about Rūmī and his *Mathnawī*. To put it succinctly, the question is: what is the reparation that is intended by Rūmī and what is it that he intends to be experienced by readers? This might be an evanescent, indeed impossible, question in consideration of an author in modern literary studies, but in the context of a deeply spiritualized and avowedly mystical writer, this question is always close to the surface of our examination of Rūmī.[4] In this essay I presume to deal expressly with the question of *what* the *Mathnawī* teaches. I have found it necessary

ma'ānī of Abī Halāl 'Askarī, I, 271, Chap Miṣr 1352, given here in my translation. See also the translation by Nasrollah Pourjavady, *Sawāniḥ: Inspirations from the World of Pure Spirits* (London: KPI Ltd., 1986).

[4] I must add that this essay is intended to be read in conjunction with, and as a counterpart to, my essay entitled "Narrative Structure and Polyphonic Discourse in the *Mathnawī*," in the *Mawlana Rumi Review*, vol. 4 (2013), pp. 50-83.

to present the paper largely through examples of quotations from the *Mathnawī*, thus allowing the text to present what I am only capable of selecting and translating.

The Khurāsānī mystical tradition treats love as a profound mystery to the human mind, as we see in the *Savāniḥ* of Aḥmad Ghazālī:

> *'ishq pushīdast hargiz kas nadīdastash 'ayān*
> *lāfhā-yi bīhūda tā kay zanad īn 'āshiqān*
> *har kas az pindār-i khʷud dar 'ishq lāfī mīzanad*
> *'ishq az pindār khāli vaz chunīn u az chunān*
>
> Love is concealed. No one has ever seen it clearly
> These lovers, how long will they make their useless boasts?
> All boast of being in love in their own fantasy[5]
> But love is free from fantasy of such and such.[6]

The hiddenness of love is not the half of it, however. Love, even misunderstood, inadequate, human love, is a constant source of pain. Again, Aḥmad Ghazāli puts his finger directly on the spot:

> *balāst 'ishq manam kaz balā naparhīzam*
> *chu 'ishq khufta būd man shavam bar angīzam*
>
> Love is affliction from which I do not shrink
> When love's asleep I turn to it and rouse it.
>
> *marā rafīqān gūyand kaz balā biparhīz*
> *balā dilast man az dil chigūna parhizam*
>
> My friends tell me "abstain from the affliction"
> Affliction is the heart: how can I shrink from it?
>
> *dirakht-i 'ishq hamī parvaram miyān-i dil*
> *chu āb bāyadish az dīdagān furū rīzam*
>
> The tree of love I nurture in my heart
> If it needs water, I stream from my eyes.

[5] Cf. *Mathnawī* I:6, *har kasi az ẓinn-i khʷud shud yār-i man*, "Each person was my friend in his own thought."

[6] *Risāla-yi savāniḥ*, ed. J. Nurbakhsh, pp. 8ff.; my translation.

agarchi 'ishq khʷush u nā khʷush ast andūh-i 'ishq
marā khʷush ast ki har dū biham bar āmīzam

Though love is sweet and its sorrow is unpleasant
to me it's sweet to mix together both.[7]

Throughout the *Savāniḥ*, Aḥmad Ghazāli explains that love has its own apparently absurd logic, which is really a mystical truth, yet he does so in a language which is always encrypted in the metaphors of a rapturous code. By contrast Rūmī, writing some 140 years later, makes the mysteries of love accessible to a new audience, through his strategy of didactic intensification. In simpler terms, instead of presuming the ability of the reader to jump up to the level of understanding such sublime utterances, he seems to have found a way of speaking in his poetry—presumably as a result of having been cooked and burnt in the fire of Shams al-Dīn, his revolutionary teacher—to a much wider audience. This he has done through a poetry of gradual teaching, through rhetorical, poetic, didactic means such as I have referred to elsewhere.[8] In my final nod of acknowledgment of Aḥmad Ghazālī's insight into the problem that Rūmī would take on as a challenge, we read:[9]

mā dar gham-i 'ishq gham gusār-i khʷīshīm
shūrida u sar gashta-yi kār-i khʷīshīm

In love's distress we do console ourselves
distracted and bewildered by our work,

sawdā zadigān-i rūzigār-i khʷīshīm
hamṣayādīm o ham shikār-i khʷīshīm

who are downcast by our own livelihood,
ourselves the hunters and ourselves the game.[10]

From the start, and all the way through the *Mathnawī*, there are many references to pain, ailments, sicknesses, medicines, physicians, and doctors. One of Rūmī's favorite images in the *Mathnawī* is that of the spiri-

[7] Ibid, p. 21.

[8] See note 4 above.

[9] *Risāla-yi savāniḥ*, ed. J. Nurbakhsh, p. 17.

[10] My translation, with acknowledgments to Pourjavady, *Sawāniḥ: Inspirations*, p. 31.

tual physician: the perfect Sufi and guide is called the *ṭabīb-i ilāhi*, divine physician (IV:1797), devotee of God, as here in III:2702ff:

mā ṭabībānīm shāgirdān-i ḥaqq

we are physicians, devotees of God. . .

ān ṭabībān-i ṭabī'at dīgarand
ki bi dil az rāh-i nabḍī bungarand

those natural physicians—they are different—
they look into the heart by feeling pulses

mā bi dil bī vāsiṭa khʷush bingarīm
kaz farāsat mā be 'ālī manẓarīm

We need no tool to look deep into hearts
From insight we've an elevated view.

ān ṭabībān-ī ghadhā-and u thimār
jān-i hayvānī bidīshān ustuvār

They're doctors of nutrition and effects
By them the animal body is made stronger

mā ṭabībān-ī fi'ālīm u maqāl
mulhim-i mā partaw-i nūr-ī jalāl

We are physicians of the deed and word
inspired by the ray of glorious light

. . . dastmuzdi mī nakhʷāhīm az kasī
dastmuzd-i mā rasad az ḥaq basī

. . . And we don't ask a fee of anyone
the fee which comes from God suffices us.

hīn ṣalā bīmārī-yī nāsūr rā
dāruyī mā yik bi yik ranjūr rā

Look, here, for the incurable disease,
we are the drug for sick ones, every one.

He also uses the expression *ṭabīb-i dil*, "heart physician," in VI:1779:

ān malīḥān ki ṭabībān-ī diland
sūyi ranjūrān bi pursish māyiland

Those charming ones, the doctors of the heart
incline towards the sick to ask them questions.

Rūmī declares he has already donned his surgical garments in the first few lines of the *Mathnawī*, thus I:23ff.:

shād bāsh ay 'ishq-i khʷush sawdā-yi mā
ay ṭabīb-ī jumla 'illathā-yi mā

Rejoice, O Love, that is our sweetest passion,
physician of our many illnesses!

ay davā-yi nakhvat u nāmus-i mā
ay tu aflātūn u jālīnūs-i mā

Relief from our pomposity and boasting,
O You who are our Plato and our Galen!

Here he mentions the most famous metaphysician and physician of the ancient world, Plato and Galen.[11] In Rūmī's time, as well as in the ancient world, philosopher and physician worked in a continuum of knowledge, learned in both realms. But the physician he addresses is not a human being at all, but Love. Rūmī illustrates the workings of the divine physician with the first story of the *Mathnawī*, of the King and the slave-

[11] R.A. Nicholson said of this line, "Arabian and Persian medicine is permeated by Greek philosophy, so that the standard Moslem biographical dictionary of famous physicians naturally includes, by way of introduction, articles on Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and other philosophers as well as on Hippocrates and Galen. Plato's own theory of love makes the mention of him here specially appropriate; if further authority for linking him with Galen were needed, we might quote Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, I 49 penult., where it is stated that he wrote 'a book on medicine, which he sent to his disciple Timaeus'" (*Mathnawī of Jalāluddīn Rūmī* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937], Vol. VII, Commentary on Book I:24, p. 13).

girl. In this complex, much discussed story, Rūmī relates two separate but connected instances of sickness: the first when the slave-girl falls sick and frustrates the king's lustful intentions, and the second which brutally resolves the story, when the king's divine physician has the slave-girl's former boyfriend, a goldsmith, poisoned. The second bout of sickness (the goldsmith's) turns out to be the actual cure for the first bout of sickness (the slave-girl's). Her sickness, having been misdiagnosed by the court physicians, was immediately recognized by the divine physician as "an aching heart"; it is a worldly, romantic heart sickness, but is a sign of the spiritual malady of the heart:[12]

dīd ranj u kashf shud bar vay nihuft
līk panhān kard u bar sulṭān naguft

He saw the pain and opened up the secret
but did not tell the king and kept it hidden.

ranjash az ṣafrā u az sawdā nabūd
bū-yi har hīzum padīd āyad zi dūd

Her pain was not from black or yellow bile:
the scent of wood is sent up in its smoke.

dīd az zārīsh ku zār-ī dil ast
tan khʷush ast u ū giriftār-ī dil ast

He saw in her distress her broken heart:
her body healthy but her heart in chains.

'āshiqī paydāst az zārī-yi dil
nist bīmāri chu bīmāri-yi dil

The sign of being in love's an aching heart;
there is no suffering like the suffering heart.

The very moment Rūmī utters this last line he is carried away in a dialogue of ecstatic flight, to which there is hardly a parallel in the rest of the *Mathnawī*, as he contemplates the inexpressible power of love, suggested by one word, *shams*, "sun," the name of his greatest teacher. In a

[12] *Mathnawī*, I:106ff.

few lines he has moved effortlessly from the love-struck palpitations of an adolescent serving girl to an extended contemplation of the ineffable glories of divine love which had been shown to him in ecstasies: he will not bring himself to reveal them here to his listeners, although he struggles to do so. In fact, his ecstasy is contagious, and the passage is generally found to be inspiring and to "lift" the reader's heart. This is something for which Rūmī is famous: he engages the reader's imagination in a story, often introducing them with lines such as these, among many similar examples in the *Mathnawī*:

būd shāhī dar zamāni pīsh az īn,

In former times there was a king (I:37)

būd baqqālī u vay rā tūtī'-ī

There was a greengrocer—he had a parrot... (I:248)

būd shāhī dar jihūdān ẓulmsāz

There was a cruel king among the Jews... (I:325)

būd bāzārgān u ū rā tūtī'ī...

There was a merchant and he had a parrot... (I:1557)

yik khalīfa būd dar āyām-i pish. . . (I:2255)

In days of old there was a certain caliph. . .

The reader thus enters what Mircea Eliade would call a fabulous, sacred past of *illud tempus*: instantly the listener is caught up in a mythological time of *būd*, "there was," or, as stories are introduced in modern Persian, *yikī būd yikī nabūd*, "Once upon a time..." It has the effect of engaging the imagination and immobilizing the intellect, and is, in the metaphor of my title, the heart-surgeon's anesthetic. A problem must be resolved and an imaginary scenario is laid out for the reader to contemplate. But Rūmī interrupts his naturalistic story line with intricate connections and severances, cauterizings and ligatures of analogies and examples, leading from one realm of meaning to another. As a master physician of the soul, Rūmī performs the procedure seemingly effortlessly:

the "anaesthetized" listener is unaware of any mental discomfort or emotional disturbance. In this "operation," in the course of sublimely poetic passages, the reader's heart slows to a stop, as it were, and the *Mathnawī* becomes the heart-lung machine for the duration of the procedure. So here, like Rūmī, in explaining the things of which he himself talks, we too resort to metaphor.

Rūmī says:

'illat-i 'āshiq zi 'illathā judāst
'ishq usṭurlāb-i asrār-i khudāst

The lover's suffering's like no other suffering:
Love is the astrolabe of God's own mysteries.

'āshiqī gar zīn sar u gar zān sar ast
'āqibat mārā bidān sar rahbar ast

No matter whether love is of this world
or of the next, it steals us to that world.

har chi gūyam 'ishq rā sharḥ u bayān
chūn bi 'ishq āyam khijil bāsham az ān

Whatever words I say to explain this love,
when I arrive at love I am ashamed.

garchi tafsīr-i zabān rawshangar ast
līk 'ishq-i bī-zabān rawshantar ast

Though language gives a clear account of love,
yet love beyond all language is the clearer.

chūn qalam andar nivishtan mī shitāft
chūn bi 'ishq āmad qalam bar khʷud shikāft

The pen had gone at breakneck speed in writing,
but when it came to love it split in two.[13]

[13] *Mathnawī*, I:110-14.

Difficult as it might be for the pen to come to the discussion of love without splitting in two, I want to do so, and begin by looking more closely at the word for "love" in I:111:

> No matter whether love is of this world
> or of the next, it steals us to that world.

The word for "love" here, *'āshiqī*, is the abstract form of the noun of agency derived from the verbal root *'shq* (from which *'ishq*, "love," is also derived): it is not therefore the philosophical abstraction "love," but is an active state of "lover" (*'āshiq*) made into an abstract, i.e. the state of being a lover, just as motherhood (*mādarī*) is the abstract noun for the active state of being a mother (*mādar*). Rūmī does not blame the slave-girl for feeling heart-sickness, for he acknowledges that *'āshiqī*, the state of being a lover, has the power to make us suffer, whether it is a tender infatuation, or a powerful mystical yearning. To be in *'āshiqī* is the human condition, in the state of attraction, needing, yearning, and being torn apart. All suffer from the condition of love, from the lowest to the highest, as he says (III:4722):

> *bā du 'ālam 'ishq rā bīgānagī*
> *andar ū haftād u dū dīvānagī*
>
> Love has estrangement with both worlds,
> in it there are six dozen forms of madness,
>
> *sakht pinhān ast u paydā ḥayratash*
> *jān-i sulṭānān-i jān dar hasratash*
>
> It is quite hid: confusion is apparent
> the souls of spiritual sultans sigh for it.

It is a precondition that those who need the open heart surgery of the *Mathnawī* suffer from spiritual heart dis-ease, and it is these people Rūmī addresses, as at the opening of the *Mathnawī* (I:3):

> *sīna khʷāham sharḥa sharḥa az firāq*
> *tā bigūyam sharḥ-i dard-i ishtiyāq*
>
> I need the breast that's torn to shreds by parting,
> to give expression to the pain of heartache.

Here, for the *ṭabīb-i dil*, the "spiritual heart-surgeon," the heartache and being torn apart are necessary for mystical understanding.

The exposition of the mystery of love is the purpose and pinnacle: towards the end of Book III, at the center of the *Mathnawī*, there is a long discourse on the reciprocal nature of love (III:4392ff.), which is the fundamental law of relationship between the finite and the infinite. Love binds together the universe, in that every atom of the universe is desiring its own mate (III:4404):

jumla ajzā-yi jahān zān ḥukm-i pish
juft juft u āshiqān-i juft-i khʷish

By that first Law all atoms of the world
are mated and in love with their own mate.

The nature of love and desire is that they derive from the most sublime origins of reality, in the all-pervading relationship between the Lordship of the creator and the servitude of the created things. This is a subject which is infinite in explanation (III:4443, 4445):

mayl u 'ishq ān sharaf ham su-yi jān
zīn yuḥib rā u yuḥibbun rā bidān

This glory too desires and loves the soul
take note of this "*He loves*" and "*they love Him*."

gar biguyam sharḥ-i īn bi ḥad shavad
mathnavī hashtād tā kāghaz shavad

If I explained this it would have no limit,
The *Mathnawī* would run to eighty books.

However, it is a teaching which can only be understood by those of the highest caliber, and Rūmī threatens to desist from his attempts to explain (though he cannot in fact desist) at III:4456:

tark-i jaldī kun kaz īn nāvāqifī
lab biband allāhu a'lam bi'l-khafī

Abandon haste, you're ignorant of this
Seal up the lip, for "*God knows best the secret*."

Rūmī had started the *Mathnawī* with the complaint of separations (*judāihā*). It is in understanding what causes the pain of separations, being torn apart by desire, longing, and suffering, that resolution and consolation are found. In the human predicament, love is both the cause and also its cure. One cannot but help notice that Rūmī's wit and sometimes surreal sense of humor throughout the *Mathnawī* serve as a source of consolation in this state of separation. As the *Mathnawī* progresses, each couplet conveys a *nukta*, or "point of intelligence," that is intended to dispel the sense of separation felt by the soul, which is dominated by the self-regarding self (*nafs*). The *nay*, or reed-flute, is Rūmī's first symbol of the dilemma of the lover who suffers separation from the beloved, as it complains of having been *torn* from its origins in the reed-bed but which is also soothing, as it reminds the listener of love's consolations:

nay ḥarīf-i har ki az yāri burīd
pardahā-ash pardahā-yi mā darīd

The reed is friend to all who are lovelorn;
its melodies have torn our veils apart.

hamchu nay zahrī u taryāqi ki dīd
hamchu nay damsāz u mushtāqi ki dīd

Who ever saw a poison and a cure,
a mate and longing lover like the reed?

In some of Rūmī's most ecstatic moments the dichotomy of love is given expression in terms of the necessary opposition of divine absence and union, violence and grace, as in III:4720:

'aql ḥayrān ki chi 'ishq ast u chi ḥāl
tā firāq-i u 'ajabtar yā veṣāl

The mind, confused, said "What are love and *ḥāl*[14]
More wonderful His absence or His union?"

and I:1580:

[14] "Ecstasy."

'āshiqam bar qahr u bar luṭfash bijid
bu 'l-'ajab man 'āshiq-i īn har du ḍid

I love so much His violence and His grace!
How wonderful, I love these two extremes!

When Rūmī falls into ecstasies, which happens as he moves upwards and out of homilies into passages of spiritual discourse,[15] he frequently expresses this state of one who is united with the beloved. Rūmī instructs the reader in what is required (I: 1752ff.):

chūnki 'āshiq ūst tū khāmush bāsh
ū chu gūshat mīkishad tū gūsh bāsh

So since He is the Lover, you be silent!
Be ear, since He is tugging at your ear!

band kun chūn sayl saylāni kunad
varna rusvā'i u vayrānī kunad

Restrain the torrent when it starts to flood,
or it will cause disgrace and desolation.

man chi gham dāram ki vīrānī buvad
zīr-i vīrān ganj-i sulṭānī buvad

Why should I care if there be desolation?
For underneath there lies a princely treasure.

gharq-i ḥaq khʷāhad ki bāshad gharqtar
hamchu mawj-i baḥr jān zīr o zibar

The one who drowns in God desires more drowning,
his soul tossed up and down like ocean waves.

zīr-i daryā khʷushtar āyad yā zibar
tir-i u dilkishtar āyad yā sipar

[15] See my essay in the *Mawlana Rumi Review*, IV (2013).

It's better under or above the sea?
His shaft's more captivating or His shield?

pāra karda vasvasa bāshī dilā
gar ṭarab-rā bāz dāni az balā

You will be split apart by whisperings,
dear heart, if you distinguish joys and trials.

gar murādat-rā madhāq-ī shikkarast
bī-murādī na murād-i dilbarast

Though your desired one has the taste of sugar
is not your heart's desire desirelessness?

Rūmī's spiritual physician does not unblock ventricles and arteries, but rather restores the *sight of the heart*. This is perhaps an odd idea in English, but in Persian the heart has an eye, *chashm-i dil*. When Caesar's ambassador could not see the Caliph's palace, he was told (I:1404-5):

ay barādar chūn bibīni qaṣr-i ū
chūn ki dar chashm-i dilat rustast mū

O brother, how will you perceive his palace,
when hair has overgrown your inner eye?

chashm-i dil az mū u 'illat pāk ār
vāngah ān dīdār-i qaṣrash chashm dār

Your heart's eye must be cleansed of hair and error,
and then expect that you will see his palace.

This defect of vision has from the start been described as resulting from the rust of selfishness (I:33-34):

'ishq khʷāhad kin sukhan bīrūn buvad
āyina ghammāz nabvad chūn buvad

But Love demands that these words shall come out.
How can a mirror be without reflection?

āyinat dānī chirā ghammāz nīst
zānki zangār az rukhash mumtāz nīst

Do you know why your mirror tells of nothing?
The rust has not been taken from its surface.

Rust defaces the heart: Rūmī so describes the hearts of the wicked (I:2575):

(bar) dil-i tārik-i pur zangārashān

(or for) their rust-encrusted blackened hearts?

In the latter part of the first book, Rūmī returns to this obscuring "rust" (I:3472-75):

gar zi nām u ḥarf khʷāhī bugdharī
pāk kun khʷud-rā zi khʷud hīn yiksarī

If you would pass beyond the name and letter,
then cleanse yourself of self, once and for all.

hamchu āhan zi āhanī bīrang shaw
dar riyāḍat āyina bīzang shaw

Be rust-free, like the sheen of polished iron;
be rust-free in your practice, like a mirror.

khʷīsh-rā ṣāfī kun az awṣāf-i khʷud
tā bibīnī dhāt-i pāk-i ṣāf-i khʷud

And cleanse yourself of qualities of self
so that you see your pure and holy essence.

bīni andar dil 'ulūm-i anbiyā
bī kitāb u bī mu'īd u ūstā

You'll see within your heart the prophets' science
without a book or tutor or a master.

There are countless images of the wounded heart in Rūmī's writings. Perhaps the simplest is one of the first in the *Mathnawī*, when the divine physician is examining the slave-girl (I:150ff.):

chūn kasī-rā khār dar pāyash jahad
pā-yi khʷud rā bar sar-i zānū nahad

As when a thorn has stuck in someone's foot,
he takes his foot and puts it on his knee,

vaz sar-i sūzan hamī juyad sarash
var nayābad mīkunad bā lab tarash

And with a needle's point seeks out the tip,
and if he does not find it, licks the point.

khār dar pā shud chunīn dushvāryāb
khār dar dil chūn buvad vā dih javāb

That thorn is so elusive in the foot,
tell me, how much more hidden in the heart!

khār-i dil-rā gar bidīdī har khasī
dast kay budī ghamān-rā bar kasī

If any fool could see the thorns in hearts,
then when indeed would sorrows overwhelm us?

The term "heart" is used in a variety of strengths of sense in Persian: like *jān*, "soul," it is often used as a term of endearment , or in a mild sense as in English "in my heart," meaning "the genuine person"; sometimes it is used in a much stronger sense, as the central organ of one's spiritual nature, which must be opened and purified. Once so strengthened, one is *ṣāḥib-dil*, a difficult Sufi term to translate, literally "master/owner of the heart," which I have rendered "of the heart-strong" (i.e. the opposite of "head-strong"), as here (I:726-27):

gar tu sang-i ṣakhra u marmar shavī
chūn bi ṣāḥibdil rasī gawhar shavī

You may be stone or you may be of marble,
but when you meet the heart-strong you're a jewel.

mihr-i pākān dar miyān-i jān nishān
dil madih illā bi mihr-i dil khʷushān

Implant the pure ones' love within your soul,
and keep your heart for love of the sweet-hearted.

and similarly, the phrase "heart-strong" (*ahl-i dil*) (I:729):

dil tu-rā dar kūyi ahl-ī dil kishad
tan tu-rā dar ḥabs-i āb u gil kishad

The heart will lead you to the heart-strong way,
the body to the gaol of earth and water.

Dil (heart) is also used in its strongest sense as virtually coterminous with God, not in a philosophical sense as an abstraction but as the organ which is directly illuminated by, and is ultimately derived from, God's light. Rūmī introduces this idea early in the *Mathnawī* at I:1135

bāz nūr-i nūr-i dil nūr-i khudāst
ku zi nūr-i 'aql u ḥis pāk u judāst

Your own heart's light's light is the light of God;
it's pure and far from mental, sensual light.

The light which creates the light of the heart is none other than the light of God: the metaphor of the sun reflected on the moon of the heart is therefore precise. The *sāhib-dil* (also referred to as *banda-yi allāh*, "servant of God," in II:3492) would seem to be equivalent to the notion of "Perfect Man" (*al-insān al kāmil*), as in the thought of Ibn 'Arabī.[16] We see this idea again in, for example, the following verses, where the true dervish is described (II:839 ff.):

pas dil-i 'ālam vay ast ī rā ki tan
mīrasad az vāsiṭa īn dil bi fan

[16] This was also the view of R.A. Nicholson; see his Commentary to Book I:1936 in his edition (= Isti'lamī I:1946), and II:3423 (= Isti'lamī II:3438), where he equates the term *'abd allāh*, "servant of God," with "the 'deified' or Perfect Man, invested with all the Divine attributes."

And so he is the heart of all the world
as by this heart the body is fulfilled.

dil nabāshad tan chi dānad guft u gū
dil najūyad tan chi dānad just u jū

Were there no heart what would the body know
of speech, or seek if this heart sought for nothing?

pas nazargāh-i shu'ā' ān āhan ast
pas nazargāh-i khudā dil ni tan ast

As glowing rays are seen within the iron
so God is seen within the heart, not body.

bāz in dilhā-yi juzvī chūn tan ast
bā dil-i ṣāḥib-dilī kū ma'dan ast

And so these lesser hearts are like the body
with the heart of the man of heart, the source.

The heart does not reflect the self-regarding self (*nafs*), however, even though this self thinks that it can see itself in the heart—a mistake of the worst kind. Rūmī must use poetic images and analogies to illustrate to the mind of the reader exactly what it is he is intimating when he speaks of the heart, because human hearts are *vīrān* ("ruined"). Somewhat paradoxically, though his readers are already preoccupied with sensuality, he as a poet asserts the possibility of turning the pupil away from sensuality towards the good through *tamthīl*, "comparison," and *taṣvīr*, "illustration," as he says (VI:117ff.):

lik tamthīlī u taṣvīrī kunand
tā ki dar yābad ḍa'īfī 'ishqmand

Comparison and illustration's used
so that the feeble lover understands.

mithl nabvad līk bāshad ān mithāl
tā kunad 'aql-i mujammad rā gusīl

It's not a simile but an analogy
that will unleash the frozen intellect.

'aql sar tīz ast līkun pāy sust
zānki dil vīrān shuda-ast u tan durust

The mind is sharpened but it's lame of foot
for though the body's sound the heart is ruined.

'aqlashān dar nuql-i dunyā pīch pīch
fikrashān dar tark-i shahvat hīch hīch. . .

Their minds are stuck in this world's sweetmeats
their thoughts are never giving up on lust. . .

. . . īn hama awṣāfashān nīkū shavad
bad namānad chūn ki nīkūjū shavad

. . . yet all these qualities may turn to good,
for evil does not stay when you seek good.

The heart, then, can be spoken of, but only in metaphors, as we see in this very eloquent passage of III:2268-77:

pas buvad dil jawhar u 'ālam 'araḍ
sāya-yi dil chūn buvad dil rā gharaḍ

The heart's the substance and the world's effect.
How could the heart's shade be the heart's desire?

ān dilī kū 'āshiq-i māl ast u jāh
yā zabun-i īn gil u āb-i siyāh

Is that the heart in love with wealth and rank,
beholden to this earth and muddy water?

yā khiyālātī ki dar ẓulmāt ū
mi parastadshān barāyi guft u gū

Or vain imagination which it worships
in darkness, for the sake of mere pretension?

dil nabāshad ghayr-i ān daryā-yi nūr
dil nazargāh-i khudā u āngāh kūr?

The heart is nothing but the sea of light.
The heart's God's place of sight—could it be blind?

na dil andar ṣad hazārān khāṣṣ u 'ām
dar yikī bāshad kudām ast ān kudām?

The heart's not in a hundred thousand people,
it's in a single one—which is he—who?

riza-yi dil rā bihil dil rā bijū
tā shavad ān riza chūn kūhī az ū

Give up the broken "bit" of heart—find heart!
so that, through Him, the "bit" becomes a mountain.

dīl muḥīṭ ast andar in khiṭṭa vujūd
zar hamī afshānad az iḥsān u jūd

The heart encompasses this realm of being,
dispersing gold all out of grace and kindness.

az salām-i ḥaqq salāmīhā nithār
mī-kunad bar ahl-i 'ālam ikhtiyār

It chooses to bestow on humankind
the gifts which come from God's munificence.

harki rā dāman durust ast u mu'add
ān nithār-i dil bar ān kas mīrasad

That heart's bestowal comes to every one
who has their skirt well opened and arranged.

dāman-ī tū ān niyāz ast u huḍūr
hīn manih dar dāman ān sang-i fujūr

Your skirt is that entreaty and that presence.
Beware don't fill the skirt with wicked stones.

Reason (*'aql*) is the first teacher (*pīr*), instructing the childlike mind which grasps at sensuality and does not understand it (III:2281ff.):

kay namāyad kūdakān rā sang sang
tā nagīrad 'aql dāmanshān bi chang

How can a stone appear as stone to children
till Reason takes their skirt into its grasp?

pīr 'aql āmad na ān mū-yi sapīd
mūy nimīganjad dar īn bakht u umīd

The *pīr* is reason—not that hoary hair:
hair does not fit into this fate and hope.

But as the pain of love's separations is experienced in later life, and Love itself becomes the *pīr*: Rūmī is not contradicting himself in the verses just quoted when he says later in V:3278-79:

pīr 'ishq-i tūst na rīsh-i safīd
dastgīr-i ṣad hazārān nā-umīd

The *pīr*'s the love in you and not the hoary beard,
protector of the hundred thousand hopeless.

'ishq ṣurathā bisāzad dar farāq
nāmuṣavvar sar kunad vaqt-i talāq

Love manifests the forms in separation:
the unformed one appears in time of union.

Thus the heart's dis-ease is caused by the love which makes forms in the state of separation: the cure is the "formless" (*nāmuṣavvar*), unmanifest love in separation's (*talāq*) union.

The sufferings undergone by the self are necessary in order to engender this new perception of the true nature of the heart. This is the central conundrum and paradox of Sufi teaching, expressed in the verse (I:1761):

ay ḥayāt-i 'āshiqān dar murdagī
dil nayābi juz ki dar dilburdagī

How much of lovers' lives is spent in dying!
You only win the heart by losing it.

All through the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī instructs the reader in what Love causes and demands, and towards the end he is clear in stating that the paradox contains a truth that must be realized (VI:4608-9):

pas saqām-i 'īshq jān-i siḥḥat ast
ranjhā-ash ḥasrat-i har rāḥat ast

Love's sickness is the very soul of health,
its sufferings are the goal of every pleasure

ay tan aknūn dast-i khʷud zīn jān bishū
var nimīshū'ī juz īn jānī bijū

O body, wash your hands now of this soul:
if you'll not wash, then seek another soul.

Thus, as the modern expression goes, but without the slightest sense of irony, love is something "to die for" and these lovers wish to suffer from it more, as here in VI: 4611-13:

ān gudāz-i 'āshiqān bāshad numū
hamchu mah andar gudāzash tāza rū

The lovers' melting is indeed their growing:
in melting, like the moon, the face is shining.

jumla ranjūrān davā dārand umīd
nālad in ranjūr k'am afzūn kunīd

The sick all have the hope of being cured
but this sick man cries "Make my suffering worse!

khʷushtar az īn sam nadīdam sharbatī
zīn maraḍ khʷushtar nabāshad ṣiḥḥatī

I've known no sherbet sweeter than this poison,
there is no health more pleasant than this sickness."

The fire of love that was burning in the reed in the *Naynāma* at the very beginning turns out to be the fire of love that puts out the pains of hell at the end, at VI: 4622 ff.

zi ātish-i 'āshiq azīn rū ay ṣafi
mī shavad dūzakh ḍa'īf u munṭafi

The fire of Love, on this account, good man
is making Hell enfeebled and extinguished.

gūyadash bugdhār sabuk ay muḥtasham
varna zātashhā-yi tū murd ātasham

It tells him "Pass on quickly my good man,
or else my fire will be put out by your fire."

kufr ki kibrīt-i dūzakh ūst bas
bīn ki mī pakhsānad ū rā īn nafas

The unbelief which is the hellish brimstone,
See how this breath of love is melting it!

zūd kibrītat bidīn sawdā sipār
tā na dūzakh bar tu tāzad na sharār

Quick, give your brimstone to this loving passion
that hell and all its sparks shall not attack you.

The pain of human separation serves as the master (*pīr*) directing one in this process of letting go of desire and abandoning attachment to sensuality and self-regard. Rūmī, now in his sixties at the time of writing, had lost both parents before he was forty, his first wife, his eldest son, and several beloved spiritual teachers, including Shams al-Dīn of Tabriz (twice). In the first story of the *Mathnawī*, the king had first thought the slave-girl was all to him, "My life is worthless, She is all my life, I'm wounded and in pain. She is my cure." He had begun to sense this only when he had felt he was going to lose her through her illness. The cure, in his case, involved losing her completely from his affections, when he soon finds true love in the person of the spiritual physician (I:76):

guft ma'shūqam tu būdastī na ān
līk kār az kār khīzad dar jahān

He said, "In truth you were my love, not she,
but in this world one thing becomes another. . ."

She, in turn, could only be cured of heartache when she had fallen out of love with the goldsmith, now grown ugly (I:204ff.):

chūnki zisht u nākh^{w}ush u rukhzard shud
andak andak dar dil-i ū sard shud

As he turned ugly, grim and pale of face,
he gradually went cold within her heart.

A theme that emerges early on in the *Mathnawī*, is that the ability to feel pain is not only a human universal, but also that it is necessary as a guide to the truth. Sickness can be beneficial (I:627-31):

ḥasrat u zārī gah-ī bīmāri ast
vaqt-i bīmārī hama bīdāri ast

It's sighs and sorriness when you are sick;
the time of sickness is a time to waken.

ān zamān ki mīshavī bīmār tū
mī-kunī az jurm istighfār tū

Just at the time when you are falling sick,
you beg forgiveness for your trespasses.

mī-namāyad bar tu zishtī-yi guna
mī-kunī nīyyat ki bāz āyam bi rah

The hatefulness of sin is shown to you,
and you resolve "I'll come back to the path."

'ahd u paymān mīkunī ki ba'd az īn
juz ki ṭā'at nabvadam kārī guzīn

You promise and you pledge that "After this
I'll only choose obedience for my deeds."

pas yaqīn gasht īn ke bīmārī tu rā
mībibakhshad hūsh u bīdārī tu rā

So this becomes a certainty, that sickness
will bring good sense to you, and wakefulness.

It is a principle of my reading of the *Mathnawī* that its poetic structure is itself expressive of and in harmony with its meaning: it is a structure defined by different dynamics in process in the work.[17] Rūmī's meaning is to be found *beyond* abstract formal ideas, in the working out of the dynamic process. As I have described elsewhere, the poetry starts before the story, in the voice of the author, who becomes the story-teller in order to engage and anaesthetize the reader's imagination. The procedure of the heart physician of the *Mathnawī* is not a rational, orderly operation, for the formless world can only be entered through the experience of cauterization and purification of the heart. It is only possible, in the many ecstatic passages of the *Mathnawī*, for Rūmī to intimate what he means and point into silence, with a sigh, as in the passage below. Here is the hiatus of the text, as I have termed it, where Rūmī self-censors, once he has passed through a spiritual discourse of an ecstatic character. Each couplet is a free-standing outcry, of ecstasy, plea, praise, and each is self-consumed at the very moment of utterance. The language is now tender, now violent, and there is a strong impression of pain and suffering stemming not from any connection with the preceding story but from Rūmī's own experience of suffering and separation, and knowledge of the mystery of Love. To do this he must go beyond "telling" the qualities (*ṣifāt*) which may be described in narrative form, as he says (I:1736):

shīr-i mastī kaz ṣifat bīrūn buvad
az basīṭ-i marghzār afzūn buvad

The drunken lion who goes beyond all telling
is too much for the confines of the plain.

[17] See the Introduction to Alan Williams, *Rūmī Spiritual Verses: The First Book of the Masnavi-ye Ma'navi* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), and my essay in the *Mawlana Rumi Review*, IV (2013).

At this point something else appears to speak through Rūmī, in an ecstatic monologue and dialogue:

qāfiya andīsham u dildār-i man
gūyadam mandīsh juz dīdār-i man

I'm contemplating rhymes—my lover tells me,
"You only contemplate your vision of me!"

khʷush nishīn ay qāfiya andīsh-i man
qāfiya dawlat tu'ī dar pīsh-i man

Relax, dear rhyming-couplet-contemplator
for in my couplet you are rhymed with triumph.

harf chī bvad tā tu andīshī az ān
harf chī bvad khār-i divār-i razān

What's in a word that you should contemplate?
What's in a word? The thorns around the vineyard.

harf u ṣawt u guft-rā bar ham zanam
tā ki bī īn har si bā tū dam zanam

I throw the words and strains and speech away
so that without them I can sigh with you.

ān damī kaz ādamash kardam nahān
bā tu gūyam ay tu asrār-ī jahān

That sigh which I did keep concealed from Adam
I'll say to you, O mystery of the world!

ān damī-rā ki naguftam bā khalīl
vān ghamī-rā ki nadānad jibra'īl

That sigh I never breathed with Abraham,
that sadness Gabriel has never known.

ān damī kaz vay masīhā dam nazad
ḥaq zi ghayrat nīz bī mā ham nazad

That sigh which the Messiah never breathed,
God never mentioned, in His zeal, without us.

mā chi bāshad dar lughat ithbāt u nafy
man ni ithbātam manam bī-dhāt u nafy

What's "we" in words? The "yes" and "no."
I'm not affirming. I am essenceless negation.

Ecstatic discourse is far from an indulgence in the text, but rather is a stage beyond the serial description of matters in the sensual world through linear narrative and exposition. The reader has been prepared for this poetic operation of cauterization and purification by meticulous procedures from the beginning of the *Mathnawī*, which show the reader how to move out of the lower intellect, into the imagination, and into higher intellectual and emotional states. Rūmī leads the reader to love, not to intellect (*'aql*) alone, for the mind is veiled by "servitude and sovereignty" (*bandagī u salṭanat*) from understanding "loverhood" (*'āshiqi*). This point is perhaps best illustrated in the celebrated passage of III:4726ff.:[18]

pas chi bāshad 'ishq daryā-yi 'adam
dar shikasta 'aql rā ānjā qadam

So what is love? The sea of non-existence.
Just there the foot of intellect is broken.

bandagī u salṭanat ma'lūm shud
zīn du parda 'āshiqī maktūm shud

While servitude and sovereignty are known,
yet loverhood's concealed by these two veils.

kāshkī hastī zabānī dāshtī
tā zi hastān pardahā bar dāshtī

I wish it were that Being had a tongue
to lift the veils from us existent ones.

[18] Nicholson called this passage "The Madness of Love," in his translation, *Mathnawī of Jalālu'ddin Rūmī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), vol. IV, pp. 263ff., and indeed it is one of the most intoxicated sections of the whole *Mathnawī*.

har chi gū'ī ay dam-i hastī az ān
parda-yi dīgar bar ū bastī bidān

O Breath of Being, no matter how you tell it,
you know, you fix another veil on it.

Ultimately, even ecstasy (*ḥāl*) is as useless as speech, and the next line tells of his apparent frustration in a striking image (III:4730):

āfat-i idrāk ān qāl ast u ḥāl
khūn bi khūn shustan muḥāl ast u muḥāl

Both speech and *ḥāl* are the bane of understanding:
to wash off blood with blood is ludicrous

Yet he carries on "breathing in the cage" of phenomenal existence, falling further into ecstasy, as he says in III:4732,

sakht mast u bīkh^{w}ud u āshufta-ī

You're very drunk, and senseless and distraught

and III:4734,

'āshiq u mastī u bugshāda zabān

You are a lover, drunken, and your tongue is loosed.

Only a paradox suffices: when Rūmī tells of the secret and amorous play of the divine (*rāz u nāz*), Heaven (*āsmān*) tells him it is yet more concealment (III:4735-36), and, conversely, when he tries to conceal, the divine insists on being made manifest (III:4737):

chūn bikūsham tā sirash pinhān kunam
sar bar ārad chūn 'alam kāynak manam

And when I try to hide His secret
He lifts His head "Here am I!," like a flag.

Perhaps such mystical paradoxes can only be contemplated in solitude, not in the public forum of an essay, and perhaps, after all, love is

not a suitable task for academic discourse. Yet this is what the *Mathnawī* is all about, and Rūmī is clear and persistently precise about what it is to which he points. As Physician of the Heart (*ṭabīb-i dil*) his task is to repair the heart with his poetry: and just as this *is* poetry, and we are hard pressed to explain it in prose, I do not apologize for having had constantly to quote Rūmī himself speaking in poetry. One thing that is often said about the *Mathnawī* is that after hearing it, the patient reader, who has been both Rūmī's patient and reader, feels that something of good has been implanted: it cannot necessarily be seen because, like the newly functioning heart, it is located inwardly, comprising a vision that is unseen in the prosaic light of the world of sober rational consciousness. That result of the operation of love in the *Mathnawī* is a better heart: it is not brain surgery to save the patient's sanity. It is the operation performed by the *ṭabīb-i dil* for the purification of the heart so that the eye of the heart (*chashm-i dil*) may be opened. The consequence of such an opening is most revealing, as is said (VI:4419):

ān ki ū rā chashm-i dil shud dīdibān
dīd khʷāhad chashm-i ū 'ayn'ul-'ayān

He whose heart's eye becomes his very watchman,
his eye will see the acme of clairvoyance.[19]

[19] The inscrutable term *'ayn al-'ayān*, lit. "eye of eyes," is here rendered in R.A. Nicholson's sonorous phrase (ed. Nicholson VI:4404).

The Ascension of the Word: Rhetoric and Reader Engagement in Rūmī's *Mathnawī*

James W. Morris

The title of this essay[1] is taken from a remarkably evocative expression, *mi'rāj al-kalīma*, that Prof. Su'ad al-Hakim once applied to describe Ibn 'Arabī's creative reworking of classical Qur'ānic Arabic in his lifelong effort to awaken and to communicate all the phenomenological subtleties of our deepest spiritual experience. That richly allusive Arabic phrase directly conveys both the transformative "ascension" of the artistic word from its mundane origins to the highest dimensions of meaning; and correspondingly, the spiraling ascension of each active reader's soul and intellect through that inspired poetic speech. Like Ibn 'Arabī's inimitable Arabic writing, and at virtually the same point in history, Rūmī's incomparable Persian poetry brought to life an equally rich and effective transmutation of its Qur'ānic inspiration into the already well-established genre of the epic *mathnawī*. In his immense *Spiritual Mathnawī*, in particular, Rūmī's ongoing fascination with the creative "Word"[2] is specially highlighted by four memorable invocations of that key term already in his opening Song of the Reed (lines 1-35).

The purpose of this introductory study, focusing on those celebrated opening verses of Rūmī's epic, is strictly pedagogical: to help Western students initially encountering his work (and therefore relying solely on translations) to become familiar with the rhetorical forms that the poet carefully adapted—often with clear Qur'ānic inspiration—throughout his *Spiritual Mathnawī*. Here at its very beginning, as throughout the remainder of this immense poem, all those artistic features come together

[1] Originally presented at the International Rūmī Symposium sponsored by the Rumi Institute (NEU, Cyprus) at the Mevlevi museum and shrine in Konya, during Rūmī's annual *'urs* celebration in December 2007, as part of the international UNESCO commemoration of the 700th anniversary of the poet's birth.

[2] Note the recurrence of the Persian *sukhan* (echoing the constantly repeated Qur'ānic references to the divine *kalīma*, *kitāb*, *qawl*, etc.) and *zabān*, in verses 14, 18, 28 and 33 below, together with the corresponding centrality of active human spiritual "listening" (echoing the Arabic *samā'*) opening and closing this poem, at verses 1 and 35 (and 29).

to serve as an effective mirror of each reader's particular states of soul, spirit, and mind. At the same time, though, these striking rhetorical elements work together as a mysteriously active "spiritual mirror"—or polyphonic musical composition—that progressively brings about and reflects deepening levels of each reader's participation and expanding insight.

At the very least, helping students of Rūmī's *Mathnawī* in translation to become aware of the foundational, unifying role of these rhetorical features should overcome the widespread popular misconception that this poem is somehow simply another didactic compendium of traditional Sufi, ethical, and theological teachings.[3] In fact, one has only to compare Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, from the very start, with its earlier Sufi prototypes by 'Aṭṭār and Sanā'ī, to realize just how misleading that common interpretive approach to the *Mathnawī* is.

The recurrent problems that one encounters in attempting to teach and communicate the meanings of the *Mathnawī*—just as with the Qur'ān—are rooted in this poem's constant interplay between initially unfamiliar metaphysical assumptions[4] and subtle poetic and dramatic structures intended to elicit each reader's illuminating experience of the realities and perspectives in question. With either text, translators and interpreters quickly discover that attempts at systematic explanation (both theological and philosophical) of that underlying web of metaphysical symbolism and corresponding practical prescriptions quickly lead to elaborate commentaries that can only too easily submerge the original text. On the other hand, translation alone, without a constant reminder of that original underlying framework of active individual realization,[5] necessarily keeps readers at a relatively superficial distance from what can then tend to appear as a disparate, fragmentary, even apparently random string of stories, parables, exhortations to virtuous action, wisdom sayings, didactic

[3] Readers limited to English sources can discover something (albeit in fragmented form) of later Islamic commentary traditions by following Nicholson's extensive commentary volumes accompanying his translation and edition of the *Mathnawī*.

[4] This problem is quite similar to the challenges encountered in trying to convey to modern audiences the now-unfamiliar philosophical and theological conceptions embedded by Rūmī's near-contemporary Dante (d. 1321) throughout the Purgatory and Paradise sections of the *Divine Comedy*. In the case of the *Mathnawī* itself, this ongoing difficulty helps to explain the widespread and long-lasting use of ideas associated with Ibn 'Arabī to interpret the *Mathnawī*, beginning soon after Mawlānā's passing: that is precisely because the Akbari philosophical, theological, and practical spiritual tradition is likewise so profoundly rooted in close attention to the distinctive language of both the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

[5] See Section IV below for a fuller discussion of this key unifying dimension of intellectual and spiritual "realization" (*taḥqīq*).

monologues, vivid eschatological reminders, and ecstatic utterances. As we have explained more fully in several related hermeneutical studies,[6] these initial difficulties of appreciation quickly begin to disappear once students are sufficiently able to appreciate the close analogy between these characteristic Islamic literary structures and the musical roles of different instruments, voices, timbres, keys, and orchestration; or with the corresponding functions of dramatic parts (including the chorus), characters, and stage directions in Western theatrical traditions. Such pertinent artistic parallels do highlight the degree of active individual participation and sustained study, practice, and contemplation required to appreciate the *Mathnawī*.

By carefully interweaving a number of key unifying rhetorical and structural procedures throughout his opening "Song of the Reed," Rūmī highlights and introduces for his readers a number of pivotal literary features and interpretive considerations—already somewhat familiar, of course, to his original literate audience—which are indispensable for the active reading and study of all six Books of the *Mathnawī*. The remaining sections of this study are designed to familiarize beginning students with Rūmī's elaborate interweaving of those literary devices and hermeneutical considerations from four successive perspectives. We begin with the basic structural indications provided by Rūmī's ambiguous use of different speaking voices, audiences, tonalities, and resulting perspectives. Next we move through the unfolding inner drama that the succession of those contrasting perspectives poses for each reader. Then a third level of consideration—integrating reading, reflection, and potentially illuminated understanding—is posed by the contrasting chiasmic juxtaposition of each of the poem's eight paired and contrasting sections. The fourth and final element in this richly layered drama of experience and interpretation is provided by Rūmī's introduction of the key thematic and existential touchstones that he goes on to develop throughout the following six Books.

[6] See my "Transfiguring Love: Perspective Shifts and Contextualization of Experience in the *Ghazal*s of Ḥāfiẓ," in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.), *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 227-350; "Encountering the Qur'ān: Contexts and Approaches," pp. 55-96 in *Voices of Islamic Tradition*, Vol. I: *Voices of Tradition*, ed. V. J. Cornell (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007); and "From Allusion to Insight and Right Action: Political Dimensions of Ibn 'Arabi's Hermeneutics of Spiritual Realisation," pp. 41-83 in *Symbolisme et Hermeneutique dans la pensée de Ibn 'Arabi* (Actes du Colloque), ed. Bakri Aladdin (Damascus: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2007).

I. Shifting Voices and Emerging Structure in the "Song of the Reed"

To begin with, the grammatical "voices" and corresponding audiences of each of the opening speakers here (highlighted in boldface type in the appended literal translation) provide an initial indication of the basic constitutive sections of the Song of the Reed. Thus these sudden perspective shifts in speaker, tone, and audience closely correspond to the explicit Persian prose division headings that Rūmī has provided to mark out the constituent sections of the twelve story-cycles dividing each Book throughout the rest of the *Mathnawī*.[7]

Line 1: Unusually, in comparison with the rest of this Song, the opening speaker here is unknown and vaguely indeterminate (much like the similarly indeterminate Speaker of so much of the Qur'ān), while the emphatically singular imperative makes it very clear that this poignant demand is addressed to each *individual* reader and listener. More importantly, the key opening verb here—pointedly repeated in the final verse 35—recalls both the central human practices of prayer and the (often musical) liturgical collective remembrance of God (*samā'*, literally "listening"). While on a metaphysical plane, it evokes the primordial instance of each soul's "listening" and heart-response to God's Call.[8]

Against that well-known metaphysical backdrop—familiar to anyone in Rūmī's original audience, and carrying over repeatedly throughout the entire *Mathnawī* [9]—it is important to keep in mind here the primacy of the poetic image of the *living* reed, as well as the related musical associations with the reed-flute (*nay*, in both cases). For this initial evocation of the green, well-watered bed of reeds soothingly caressed by the spirit-wind (a

[7] See the seminal study by Simon Weightman and S.G. Safavi, *Rūmī's Mystical Design: Reading the* Mathnawī, *Book One* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009).

[8] Recounted in the well-known Qur'ānic account at VII:172 of the primordial covenant and inner "witnessing" of all the human spirits (before their earthly manifestation) to the presence of their divine Lord and Sustainer, where God brings forth the spirits of all the descendants of Adam and had them witness of themselves, (saying) "'Am I not your Lord/Sustainer?' (*alastu bi rabbikum*). And they said: 'Yes indeed! We have testified'." This famous scriptural allusion to the original unity, divine awareness, and pre-existence of the human spirits was a standard metaphysical concept already elaborately developed by earlier Persian poets in a wide range of erotic love-imagery ("last night," etc.) familiar to Rūmī's readers.

[9] Here we should also mention the implicit, complementary spiritual and metaphysical emphasis involved in Rūmī's common pen-name (or concluding exhortation), in many of his lyrical *ghazal*s, as *khamūsh*: "Be quiet!" or "Shut up!"—that is, so that we can actually begin to listen and appreciate the divine Signs within and around us.

quintessential image of the paradisiac "Gardens" of the Qur'ān) suggests by contrast the traumatic rending (by an unnamed, but apparently external force), death, fragile drying, and multiple piercings that are needed to create the reed-flute, as well as providing the unforgettable occasion for the reed's opening complaint. The other foundational Qur'ānic allusion underlying the image of the reed-flute here is the mystery of the reed's true Player or Musician—the latter role again being a familiar poetic symbol of the Divine's relationship to creation and to humanity in particular. Finally, this opening imagery of the empty reed of course echoes the multiple Qur'ānic accounts of the two-fold creation of Adam, the archetypal human being: first, as a visibly empty, fragile mortal tube of "stinking mud" or "clay" (XV:26, etc.); but also as the theomorphic being whose spiritual potential and animating essence—and corresponding earthly task and responsibility—flows from the transformative inbreathing of the divine Life-Breath and Spirit (*rūḥ/ jān*).

Lines 2-7: The following six lines include *eleven* pointedly repeated uses of the first-person singular (*I*, *me*, and five times the possessive *my*), vividly highlighting the lonely, obsessively self-pitying, and blinding egoism of the isolated reed that initially remains unaware of its deeper purpose and divine connections. As is only befitting for this self-centered litany of traumatic separations, these verses are essentially a soliloquy, with no apparent or worthy audience—since the reed here bitterly thinks that even its would-be "friends" (verse 6) only spuriously imagine that they know its innermost secrets. In the concluding line of this soliloquy, though, Rūmī introduces his readers to one of his own most common rhetorical secrets, which he follows throughout the rest of this opening Song and indeed the entire *Mathnawī*: that is, his use of the final line of each section, discourse, or story as a kind of revealing enjambment or prefiguration of the central theme of the following section—here, in his first allusion to the illuminating divine "Light" of Love.

Lines 8-15: In the following lines—an intense, almost angry retort to this reed-flute's initially plaintive and self-pitying complaint—a very knowing, but still distanced and objective narrative voice reminds Rūmī's readers/listeners of the true reality and purpose of the reed and all its sufferings. Whether one imagines this objective, sometimes almost didactic narrator to also be in some way the personal voice of Rūmī himself, this specific narrative voice of wisdom returns at key points throughout the rest of the *Mathnawī*. But this first reflective and wise narrative voice is also strikingly different from the even more emotionally present and personal voice (i.e., one openly engaged with either Ḥusām al-Dīn or Shams himself), often prayerful or ecstatically rhapsodic, that suddenly

intervenes here at line 16. And again, that same unmistakably ecstatic and irrepressible personal voice, often alluding to or recalling the ongoing presence of the true Shams/divine "Sun," frequently reappears in the central hinge-sections of each larger story-cycle or discourse throughout the rest of the *Mathnawī*.

Lines 16-18:[10] If the two preceding sections witness an almost hidden inner movement from the poem's audience as a singular (and inherently separate) "you" to a nascent "we" sharing at least a common human experience of suffering ("veils") and nostalgic grieving (verse 18), line 16 suddenly introduces yet another, even more personal and challenging Voice. Curiously, the first half of this climactic verse seems to be responding like the monitory voice of a spiritual master—in salutary practical response to the renewed, self-pitying complaint shared by these newly assembled fellow travelers on this as yet undefined Path. Yet the second half of this same heartfelt verse—with its resonant Buberian "*Thou*"— takes on a sharply different tone and audience, addressing an intensely fervent prayer to a "You" that can only be divine. This "You" may be God's momentarily more personalized human mirror and theophany in the person of Shams (or even the formal addressee of the *Mathnawī*, Ḥusām al-Dīn); or each reader's own personal divine-human Friend and Guide (*yār*, *dūst*, *walī*). This memorable and powerfully autobiographical voice will quickly become familiar to each reader who progresses on through the *Mathnawī*.

The remaining two lines of this central section just as suddenly move back from the full intensity of this unforgettable Encounter to a moving personal reflection on the difficulties of communication that still await us whenever we fall away from that transforming unitive Relationship. But this now calmly knowing reflection—as we can see and feel in the implicitly imperative, yet still longing and hopeful "Good-bye!" (*wa-s-salām*) at the end of the central verse 18—is definitely intended to challenge each reader at a far deeper and more decisive level than the opening "Listen!" Since each of us has some embedded memory of those unforgettable "I-Thou" moments of Reunion (if only in the primordial, forgotten "reed-garden"), Rūmī lovingly reminds each reader at this climactic point that we must take those rare, unforgettable ecstatic moments of *non*-separation as promises and prefigurations, rather than as the occasions for further disappointment and alienating complaint.

[10] Or lines 16-17, with line 18 then standing separately as the midpoint and chiasmic hinge of the entire opening Song, marking the singular moment of each reader's necessary and decisive choosing (see Section II below).

Lines 19-22: The import of these equally central lines, which in many ways inaugurate an entirely new poem, is pointedly underlined by the opening half-line's allusive resonance ("O son") with a distinctively intimate, affectionate Qur'ānic phrase that is repeatedly used there only to evoke the transforming relationship of trust, guidance, and support between a divine messenger or prophet and his son or potential disciple.[11] The *singular* "you" and "son" addressed here—four times in the first two lines—take the form of an intentional and unmistakable challenge whose demanding practical preconditions, through the necessary purification of the lower, ego-self, are boldly enunciated in the following two verses.

Lines 23-26: At first, it appears that in these verses the same deeply personal voice of Rūmī (from the two short preceding sections) has simply returned to the intensely prayerful, worshipful mode of lines 16-18, only addressing God this time as "Love," as the divine Physician-Sage (*Hakīm*, a key divine Name) who can cure both soul (Plato) and body (Galen). But what has in fact profoundly changed in this section is that this voice is no longer speaking in the singular, but now as, or on behalf of, a transformed, newly appearing "*We*" (three times in lines 23-24) that is apparently constituted by the communion of all devoted lovers. In other words, this section suddenly presumes that the wavering, tentative "you" addressed in the preceding sections has now effectively joined in this Path of love and communion: thereby overcoming, as the archetypal divine theophanies of Muḥammad and Moses make clear (lines 25-26), all the initially daunting, apparently even impossible metaphysical oppositions initially raised in verses 7-8.

Lines 27-34: These concluding verses together constitute an almost unbearably poignant, openly autobiographical evocation of Rūmī's transforming encounter with Shams of Tabrīz. Paradoxically, they are also a first-person testimony, like the parallel opening "complaint" of the reed (verses 2-7), though here in a markedly different, metaphysically reversed key and tonality. The "I" that is speaking so tenderly and longingly—but also knowingly—to its Beloved here ("I" and "my" seven times in lines 27 and 32) is one of the deepest gratitude and acknowledgement of Grace, not of complaint and loss. And the poet's ecstatic thanks here are punctuated and heightened not by any regrets, but by his compassionate sharing and concern for each of his fellow human companions (the intimately

[11] *Yā bunaya*, "O my dear little son" in the Qur'ān: XI:42 (spoken by Noah); XII:5 (Jacob); XXXI:13-17 (Luqman); XXXVII:102 (Abraham). The dramatically differing reactions of those addressed in each of these scriptural passages are also instructive concerning the basic choice that Rūmī is offering or suggesting here.

singular "you" of verses 29 and 34). As line 31 makes clear, this actively shared and effective human gift of Compassion (that divinely creative Loving-mercy, *raḥma*, which is a uniquely all-encompassing divine Name in the Qur'ān)[12] becomes manifest as the actualized Aim of the first reed's apparent separations, as the true and mysteriously present formative "reed-bed" and promised Garden. Carefully echoing and amplifying the foundational divine saying of the Hidden Treasure[13] so familiar to all readers of Rūmī's own time and circle, this richly allusive concluding section responds to each of the reed's initial complaints through its unfolding evocation of our shared human state as the sign, fruit, and ongoing seedbed for the Beloved's breath-song.[14]

Line 35: While the opening *plural* imperative of this final verse explicitly echoes the singular "listen!" of the poem's first line, everything that has transpired in the intervening verses is reflected in this profound grammatical shift from the soliloquy of the isolated ego to the transformed "We" and loving communion of all the poet's "beloved friends."[15] The same spiritual alchemy is likewise reflected in this poem's gradual transition from the prosaic, egoistically distorted, initially painful "recounting" (*ḥikāya*: mimesis) of each life's sorrows to the transforming symphony of the divinely inspired "revelatory story."[16] The same reed, but a very different Player.

[12] As in the well-known verse: "Call upon God or call upon the All-Compassionate (*al-Raḥmān*). Whichever you call upon, to Him are the Most-Beautiful Names" (Qur'ān, XVII:110).

[13] In this highly influential divine saying, God says: "I was a Hidden Treasure, and I loved to be known. So I created the creatures/human beings so that I might be known." Throughout the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī continues to move back and forth between these two equally indispensable facets of the key Arabic term *al-khalq* here, as both that which is known (all the creatures), and that which alone fully knows and mirrors that creation (the theomorphic, fully realized human, *insān*).

[14] In content and majesty of tone alike, these concluding verses are palpably echoed in the famous final lines of *Faust II*—not surprisingly, given Goethe's fascination with these earlier Persian poetic classics.

[15] *Dūstān*, which is also the core of the common Persian compound verbal expressions for "to love" (*dūst-dāshtan*: literally "to have as friend"). Together, these two Persian expressions carefully mirror the mystic unity of the Love/Lover/Beloved (Arabic *'ishq*/*'āshiq*/*ma'shūq*) celebrated in lines 27-34.

[16] *Dāstān*, echoing the specific Qur'ānic term (*qiṣaṣ*) for spiritually significant, symbolic, or archetypal stories, especially in the description (at XII:3) of Joseph and his brothers as "the most-beautiful-and-best of stories."

II. From Solitude to Communion: Drama and Reader Engagement

The carefully orchestrated chiastic structures of each of the constitutive story-cycles in the *Mathnawī*—like their parallels and probable models in many Suras of the Qur'ān—mean that the successive internal sections of each story-cycle were intended to be read, experienced, and studied in two very different ways.[17] To begin with, reading a story or longer passage "straight through," as we normally expect to do, naturally awakens our life-like sense of intrinsic drama. On the other hand, recognizing and then working with the parallelisms or nested correspondences between internal sections that are established by Rūmī's organizing chiastic structure (illustrated in section III below) necessarily involves a more probingly critical and analytical process of comparison and reflection.[18] In fact, the alternation of these two rather different modes of engagement with the text (whether of the Qur'ān or *Mathnawī*) closely mirrors the familiar processes of everyday spiritual life, in which we are constantly engaged in what we perceive as "just experience." Yet that relatively unreflective practical engagement in life's immediate challenges proceeds simultaneously with the intricate inner processes (involving retrieval of related memories, analysis, projection, imagination, relevant levels of intuition and perception, judgment, inspiration, and so on) by which we gradually distill the deeper meanings underlying the ongoing flow of outer happenings and inner experience. In the cultural context of Rūmī's original readership, of course, these multiple dimensions of reflective spiritual engagement and interrogation were already particularly encouraged through the supportive contemplative framework of the many required and supererogatory daily prayers, vigil, and the more focused "remembrance" (*dhikr*) disciplines of the Sufi Path (*ṭarīq*).

[17] See the groundbreaking study by Weightman and Safavi, *Rūmī's Mystical Design*.

[18] Initially, this second-order element of reflective understanding and derived wisdom might naturally seem more superficial or "external" than the linear dramatic sequence of outer events and storytelling. But as the course of life's stories eventually becomes more repetitive and familiar—as is normal in the course of a lifetime's "human comedy"—then the inner fruits of observation and reflection become relatively more weighty and significant. In the course of this lifelong process of spiritual reflection on the divine Signs of creation (what the Qur'ān calls *tafakkur*)—and this inner quest for discovering the inspired "original source/meaning of events" (*ta'wīl al-ahādīth*, the particular divine grace bestowed on Joseph, at XII:6) is constantly encouraged and illustrated throughout the Qur'ān—the search for ultimate causality and deeper meaning gradually supersedes youth's practical preoccupation with proximate conditions, choices, and immediate consequences.

To begin with the reader's linear, dramatic relationship to the different consecutive voices and perspectives of the Song of the Reed, it is apparent that this initial encounter with Rūmī's poem already confronts each reader with at least seven or eight different perspectives on the meaning and proper direction of life and our awareness of the full dimensions of divine Love—and of our corresponding choices at each of these critical turns.[19] As with Plato's richly comparable *Symposium*, it is possible to read through these challenges simply as a desired or ideal progression. In that case the result is an overall successive movement corresponding to key stages in the human soul's spiritual ascension (verses 1-18) and then its subsequent compassionate "return" (lines 19-35) to help awaken and enlighten other human seekers and communities.[20]

But Rūmī was acutely aware of the pitfalls and delusions inherent in the popularization and resulting premature, purely literary encounter with such idealized spiritual schemas, which were particularly widespread in his ambient poetic culture.[21] Hence reading the Song of the Reed at even a few different occasions in life will quickly make it obvious that his concluding observation (line 35) that this story "is itself the inner reality of our *current* state"[22] means that we will normally find our own self and existential situation differently illuminated and reflected each time we return to the *Mathnawī*. Who or what we currently understand to be the "Reed" (or Love, Light, Friend, Breath, or any of the other key elements of this play) will often appear quite differently after each visitation.

Line 1: To begin with the familiar state of indeterminate observation and relatively external, only superficially participatory "listening" evoked in the opening verse, no further commentary is really needed. For it is

[19] It is noteworthy that the following tale of the King and his maidservant apparently includes a similar spectrum of symbolic "case-studies" of very different forms, expressions, or dimensions of Love.

[20] See the discussion of these almost identical narrative structures and two-fold organizing "movements" in our essay, "Dramatizing the Sura of Joseph: An Introduction to the Islamic Humanities," in *Journal of Turkish Studies* (Annemarie Schimmel *Festschrift*), vol. 18 (1994), pp. 201-24.

[21] Especially suggestive of Rūmī's suspicions in this regard is his powerful juxtaposition, at the very center of the entire *Mathnawī* (end of Book III, overlapping with the start of Book IV), of a long, highly idealized allegory of perfect spiritual love, which is suddenly followed by an ironic and painfully realistic love story focusing on the essential purifying elements of suffering, humiliation, devotion, guidance, patience, and dauntingly difficult spiritual discipline.

[22] It appears that this remark applies equally to the preceding Song of the Reed and—even more obviously—to the following richly elaborate tale of the King and his maidservant.

clear that the mutual "recounting of complaints" and bittersweet revisiting of memorably painful separations (of oneself or of others) is indeed one of the most familiar human pastimes.

Lines 2-7: Suddenly the monotony of this familiar everyday pseudo-listening is broken by the plaintive complaint of this first anonymous reed-flute. If we as readers are not put off by the self-pitying tone and the metaphysical abstraction of its mournful song, and if we are unable to deflect or ignore its implicit demands, then we are forced to interact with Rūmī's complaining reed in two other demanding and far-reaching ways. First, we are obliged to identify inwardly and personally with the poignant complaints of this voice of suffering: this response requires empathically identifying the corresponding painful dimensions of our own inner life and experience with others. The second, possible response to this part of the reed's song is that our reflection and work of sympathetic identification may extend back into the past, engaging those suffering fellow-reeds we had previously encountered, so that we find our focus shifting toward others' expressions of similar tales of suffering, loss, longing, and disappointment.

In other words, Rūmī here—in addition to offering a painfully revealing autobiographical evocation of his own secretly desperate inner state before his transformative meeting with Shams—is confronting each reader with a moving depiction of that all-encompassing human-divine interaction so beautifully depicted in a well-known divine saying (the "Ḥadīth of the Questioning") already familiar to his initial audience.[23] And the next, deeper stage of reflection—which Rūmī summarizes here in the several alternative, intentionally complementary readings of

[23] God says on the Day of the Rising: "O son of Adam, I was sick and you didn't visit Me."

He said: "O my Lord, how could I visit You, and You are Lord of the Worlds?!"

God said: "Didn't you know that My servant so-and-so was sick, yet you didn't visit him? Or didn't you know that if you had visited him you would have found Me with him?"

[Then God says:] "O son of Adam, did I not ask you for food, but you refused to feed Me?"

He said: "O my Lord, how could I feed You, and You are Lord of the Worlds!?"

God said: "Now didn't you know that my servant so-and-so asked you for food, but you didn't feed him? And didn't you know that if you had fed him you would have found that with Me?"

[Then God says:] "O son of Adam, I asked you for a drink, but you didn't give Me anything to drink."

He said: "O my Lord, how could I give You a drink, and You are Lord of the Worlds!?"

God said: "My servant so-and-so asked you for a drink, but you didn't give him any. But if you had given him a drink you would have found that with Me."

line 3[24]—reveals that we are only capable of even perceiving, and then properly responding to, that very real suffering to the degree that we have previously passed through those same figurative but all too palpable "Fires."

Perhaps the most important lesson dramatized in verses 2-7 is the immense gulf separating our merely conceptual, formal "knowing" of these basic spiritual laws from the demanding practical steps that are needed to translate those abstract principles into reality. The basic symbolic metaphysical framework assumed in these opening lines was quite familiar to Rūmī's original readers. But the very cultural omnipresence of such spiritual principles—the importance of the soul's deepest longing as our inner compass and source of animating energy; the profound need to know the divine "Friends" (*awliyā' Allāh*); the transformative "secrets" of the divine Breath/Spirit and Grace—only serves to intensify our awareness of our apparent helplessness with regard to properly applying them.

Lines 8-15: The new narrative voice introduced here—which initially sounds much like a learned, but not very practically helpful guide—seems at first only to intensify and highlight the ongoing helplessness and neediness of this "normal," complaining reed. The ostensible practical lessons so readily proffered in this section—developing true inner humility ("becoming nothing"); and madly surrendering, like Majnūn, to the transforming passion of overwhelming divine Love—were familiar stereotypes of every Sufi handbook and spiritual poem of Rūmī's day. But those suggestions are also radical, drastically life-changing steps that seem inherently to defy any voluntary enactment, since they depend on a rare inner burning "Fire" of passionate divine Love. Even more problematically, the symptoms and descriptions of that mysterious Love first described here ("poison and cure-all," "a Path full of blood/suffering," "crazy," intoxicating, and so on) are not unambiguously enticing, especially since this divine elixir seems in any case to be dependent (as the allusions to Moses at Sinai and to Muḥammad's heavenly ascension pointedly suggest) on rare and extreme gifts of divine grace reserved only for specially favored prophets and saints.

Against this still unresolved practical backdrop, Rūmī's narrator here only vaguely alludes, implicitly and in passing, to an as yet undefined "Path" of inner purification and potentially salvific fellowship that might

[24] To begin with, the multi-faceted language here—which has given rise to many commentaries and interpretations, reflected in Nicholson's translation—is an unambiguous allusion to one of the best-known short Suras of the Qur'ān (XCIV:1-8), which begins "Have we not opened up (unburdened) for you your chest (= heart), and lifted off from you your burden, which was pressing down on your back. . . ?"

yet offer some life-saving way out of this apparently helpless dilemma. The one new practical choice suggested here, however fragile and uncertain that might at first appear, is the foundational virtue of "spiritual perseverance" (*ṣabr*), which is the indispensable accompaniment of each of these demanding outward aspects of the Path that are tentatively introduced here.

Lines 16-18: From a dramatic perspective, the intensely personal, ecstatically longing words and voice of this new speaker cannot help but evoke Rūmī's transforming encounter with Shams of Tabrīz. For this is a personal voice that would already be recognizable to most of his initial readers through its unforgettable expression in much of his immense *Dīvān* of lyrical *ghazal*s and quatrains. But where does this climactic new section and unforgettably rhapsodic voice actually leave the engaged reader? What new choice or alternative does it open up—especially for those jaded or skeptically inquisitive readers who may well ask how often most human souls are visited by the grace and rare destiny of meeting *their* own Shams? And how, such readers must surely ask, can we actually become that enlightened, immortal "fish"[25] effortlessly swimming through the often terrifying divine Seas?

The remainder of the poem begins to articulate Rūmī's own personal response to these key practical challenges. But verse 18, at the literal midpoint of this opening poem, only repeats and highlights that central choice: either one can stay engaged on this still practically unknown, only intermittently visible Path; or else, Rūmī calmly and directly invites his less courageous or still unprepared readers to simply walk away. Indeed his final "and Peace be with you!," under these circumstances, seems more of a regretfully knowing blessing (or even a promise of eventual discovery), than a critical or angrily dismissive gesture.

Lines 19-22: In terms of practices and formal teaching, the next short section appears to introduce, above all, the variegated practical processes of inner purification and non-attachment which constitute one of the main recurring subjects of the entire *Mathnawī* (and essential foundations of the institutions later elaborated in the Mevlevi Sufi path).

On the more dramatic, personal level, however, this short central section is marked by two other key developments and implicit choices.

[25] The richly complex imagery in lines 17-18 is all connected to the influential symbolic account, at the center of the Sura of the Cave (Qur'ān, XVIII:60-82), of Moses' long search for and eventual discovery—or sudden recognition—of the Water of Life (at "the meeting place of the two Seas" of body and Spirit), when his dried fish is suddenly revivified (the central theme of the entire Sura) and joyfully returns to its original Home. See also the related imagery of the oyster and Pearl, at line 21 (n. 36 below).

First, Rūmī boldly suggests the practically critical possibility that he (or his transforming "Word," at verses 18 and 33) may be able to help more directly in liberating the reader from his or her debilitating attachments and veils. This initiatic role of the inspired "Word" of grace also recalls the transforming power of music, already evoked in the underlying reed-flute imagery of this entire poem.

The second dramatic dynamic of this deceptively brief section is to propose Rūmī's equivalent of a kind of Pascalian wager, a spiritual gambit which is apparently intended to help more timorous readers to overcome any anxieties and outright fears evoked by the poet's earlier emphasis (at lines 8-15) on the risks and sufferings entailed by the surrender to Love. Adopting a more positive and seductive tone, the poet highlights here the infinite "disproportionality" of the soul's gamble on Love, whose rewards and consequences—if they are granted—so palpably outweigh all the other momentary satisfactions of the unenlightened life. On an equally positive note, this master-like voice more openly alludes (line 22) to the crucial motivating role of Love in underpinning all the daunting effort (and offsetting the apparent risks and sacrifices) that are inherent in the demanding lifelong disciplines of purification. Both of these positive observations apparently lead Rūmī back to the rhapsodic "ode to Love" that constitutes verses 23-26.

Lines 23-26: If each of these constitutive sections of the Song of the Reed articulates a particular unifying spiritual virtue, then this short section is visibly devoted to the central Qur'ānic virtues of thankfulness (*shukr*) and praise (*ḥamd*). This effusive celebration of divine Love is not simply a moving autobiographical expression of Rūmī's own transforming encounter with Shams—though the passionate invocation of similar memories does frequently interrupt every Book of the *Mathnāwī*. What is even more important for each reader here is the poet's grammatically telling inclusion[26] of *every* lover, whose ecstatic discovery of and by Love unforgettably reveals this archetypal overcoming of the earlier apparent separation (lines 7-8) of soul and body, heaven and earth. As Rūmī then reminds us, the Source and full implications of this transforming gift of Love are memorably prefigured in the archetypal theophanic illuminations of Muḥammad and Moses (verses 25-26).[27] And against that back-

[26] In the space of only two lines (23-24), Rūmī emphatically (albeit mysteriously) speaks three times of "*our*" curing and healing.

[27] For a more adequate explanation of these complex allusions, from both Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, to the Mi'rāj (archetypal spiritual ascension and return) of the Prophet Muḥammad and to the Qur'ānic account of the theophanies of Moses, see our detailed study of "The

drop, the unexplained, challengingly intimate personal address of the final line here ("O lover") openly suggests that at least some readers' earlier hesitancies have now been definitively set aside.

Lines 27-34: In a centuries-long poetic tradition particularly devoted to elegantly compressing the greatest number and depth of potential meanings into the briefest possible aesthetic form, the succinct interweaving of musical and erotic imagery in the opening half-line of this section would surely place it among the prize contenders. Since the "intimate Friend" (*damsāz*: literally "Breath-maker" or "Breath-player") so directly evokes the universally animating, life-giving divine Spirit, who plays out through His fragile human reed the universal drama of Love and creation, Rūmī's image here suggests that we are individually *both* a player and (even more certainly) the specially adapted instrument—and audience—of the divine Concert. Both of those "vertical," metaphysical possibilities seem almost inseparable by this point. Yet both of these possibilities are further concretized and emotionally heightened by their reflection at the intensely present "horizontal" level of the human *kiss*, with all its endless possible meanings and expressions of love.

In the second half-line (of verse 27), that musical-erotic dimension of the "reed" is further extended to an even more inclusive Qur'ānic symbol of God's supreme cosmic and artistic creativity: the divine (reed-) "Pen" of the universal Intelligence that writes out all the "Books" of created existence.[28] The ironically punning connection here between that divine instrument of all creation and the poet's own authorial hand no doubt also alludes to Rūmī's conviction concerning the particular inspired character of this poem, which he had already so boldly emphasized in the famous opening lines of his prose prologue to this first Book of the *Mathnawī*.[29]

Spiritual Ascension: Ibn 'Arabī and the *Mi'rāj*," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 107 (1987), pp. 629-52, and vol. 108 (1988), pp. 63-77. (Soon to be available in our forthcoming volume *Ibn 'Arabī and His Interpreters: Contexts and Foundations*.) The significance of Rūmī's allusions here is summed up in the Qur'ānic insistence (Qur'ān, XVII:1) that the Prophet's entire journey was ". . . so that We might cause him to see, among Our Signs."

[28] Because the pen (*qalam*), in Islamic civilization, was always made from carefully cut and trimmed reeds, Rūmī's reference here to "*my* reed" directly recalls not only the reed flute and cosmic Qur'ānic imagery of the divine Speech and Breath/Spirit, but also the close parallelism between his own inspired poetic creation in this *Spiritual Mathnawī*, and the source of earlier divine revelations.

[29] Western readers will be reminded of the parallel role of Prospero's "books" and "magic" in Shakespeare's *Tempest*.

The rest of this celebrated concluding section dramatically alternates between further classic expressions of this unitive realization of Love, subsuming all individuals and apparent "egos" in the One divine Breath, and a poignant series of potentially still-painful reminders (at verses 28, 29, 31 and 34) of the discordantly singular "I" of the reed's earlier soliloquy. But what has changed at this end-point is Rūmī's careful metaphysical contextualization of the human experience of suffering, loss, and apparent separation within the larger divine framework of Life, Love, Grace, Light, and the Word (lines 30-33) which unveils that suffering's deeper meaning. For by this point, the nostalgic longing and object-less love that filled and fed the first reed's mourning now turn out to mirror at every stage the very Heart of creation, in this poem's memorable concluding evocation of the influential Divine Saying: "I was a hidden Treasure, and I loved to be known; so I created creation/human beings in order that I might be known."[30]

Verse 35: This final verse apparently reverses (or more accurately, completes and fulfills) each of the elements of this poem's opening invocation. For "*this* story"—which is both the reed's song just completed, and the more elaborate narrative retelling of that opening story which follows—is a mirror that (like Joseph's "best-and-most-beautiful of tales" in the Qur'an, 12:3) necessarily includes and illuminates all conceivable stories and attitudes.

III. Chiasmus and Reflection: Reconsidering the Soul's Unfolding Drama

As we already noted (section I above), a preliminary examination based primarily on the shifting voices and perspectives in the Song of the Reed suggests a succession of eight distinct sections (or nine, if we separate out the central hinge—verse 18), with the central subjects of each of the first four sections closely paralleling the final four, only in inverse order (i.e., sections 1 and 8; 2 and 7; 3 and 6; 4 and 5). This linking chiasmic structure, which turns out to be followed (although in increasingly more complex forms) throughout—and apparently also across—each of the six

[30] See also the note to our translation (lines 33-34) below briefly explaining the Qur'ānic and Ḥadīth references to the "rust" and "polishing" of hearts, as well as the fuller treatment of this theme in chapter 2 of *The Reflective Heart: Discovering Spiritual Intelligence in Ibn 'Arabī's "Meccan Illuminations"* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2005).

Books of the *Mathnawī*,[31] creates a remarkably intertwined aesthetic and intellectual structure in which each section in the first half typically raises a problem or issue that is then resolved, transformed, or answered in some way by its later, corresponding "parallel" section. The careful adherence to this organizing procedure already throughout the Song of the Reed, albeit in such a simplified and relatively visible form, suggests that this opening poem was meant to provide Rūmī's readers with something like a master-key to the chiasmic structures developed in the twelve, quite visibly coherent and constitutive story-cycles of Book I and each succeeding Book.

Although we began our earlier discovery of this deeper organizing structure (in section I) by exploring the revealing formal features of Rūmī's opening poem, the usefulness and reliability of those indications is confirmed when we consider the primary subjects and progressive development of the four corresponding pairs of sections here.

Sections 1 and 8 (verses 1 and 35): As already discussed above, both of these framing lines start with the imperative "Listen!" But everything we find in the concluding line 35 involves a dramatic perspective shift from the unexamined subjective "recounting" and complaining focus on the separations expressed in the first verse and throughout the following section. Instead the tone, the addressees, and the speaker's relation to them in the final line 35 (which basically summarizes the preceding eight-line section) all boldly highlight a dramatic reversal of each constitutive element of the opening verse: here those addressed are now our fellow "friends" (*dūstān*), sharing intimately in a common, archetypal spiritual "tale" (*dāstān*) which reveals to us the purposeful "inner reality" of "our" (at once each reader's, and all of humanity's) actual spiritual state.

Sections 2 and 7: The shared theme here is that of the ego, but speaking in the sharply contrasting voices of two totally different "I's." The first speech (tellingly, all "complaint") of the reed is a desperately lonely one: isolated, bereft, pained, and separated from both its divine

[31] The recent pioneering study of these organizing structures of Rūmī's *Mathnawī* (n. 7 above) promises a further detailed volume devoted to Book II, while one of its authors (S.G. Safavi) has since published a series of short articles in the journal *Transcendent Philosophy* (www.iranianstudies.org) demonstrating Rūmī's careful development of the same chiasmic procedure (of 12 "discourses" divided among three successive "blocks" of four) throughout each of the remaining Books of the *Mathnawī*. However, one should hasten to add that the visibly growing complexity of those structures in each successive Book of the *Mathnawī* also illustrates Rūmī's visible resistance to any sort of arbitrary, unnaturally rigid uniformities—a feature again mirroring the unpredictable architectonic structures of each Sura of the Qur'ān.

Source and its fellow human beings, singing only the lament of nostalgia and unrequited longing. In a word, it represents the alienated condition of the dead, fragile, traumatically pierced stick somehow imagining itself to be the Musician's transforming breath and touch. By the end of the poem, the "individual" speaker is revealed instead as the underlying communion-kiss of the loving divine "Breath"[32]—here at once Life, Love, Grace, Light, Word, and Heart.[33]

Sections 3 and 6: These sections present the manifestations and perception of divine Love from two very different, but progressive and complementary perspectives. The first section (lines 8-15) already acknowledges the centrality of Love, but still almost entirely from the narrow, self-limited perspective of the solitary and mournful reed.[34] Hence it focuses on the tumultuous passion and familiar poetic litany of the symbolic sufferings and inner troubles associated with love: blood (uncontrollable emotion and suffering), craziness (the literal Arabic root meaning of *Majnūn's* name), grieving, darkness, poison, boiling, and wine's intoxicating ferment. The only positive side emerging here at first is the liberating force of Love perceived as a persistent motivator (in the face of loss and death) and accidentally effective destroyer which conveniently breaks through "our veils" and illusions of separation.[35] Only in the middle of this third section (at lines 11-12) do we encounter the actually central, catalytic role of the divine "Friend," Guide, and Guardian (*yār/walī*): first as the otherwise unspecified "universal antidote" (*tiryāq*: also ironically the word for opium!) for life's persistent pains; then as the consolation of the

[32] As explained in the translation notes, Rūmī assumes his readers will be aware of the underlying identity of the Spirit (Arabic *rūḥ*) as literally both "wind" and the life-giving divine "Breath"; and of the closely related Qur'ānic term for "soul" (*nafs*) as both the individual soul-breath and the ever-renewed divine "Love-Breathing" (*nafas al-Raḥmān*) that re-creates all manifestation at every instant.

[33] See n. 65 below on the "rust"—and necessary "polishing"—of the mirror of the human heart (lines 33-34).

[34] The reed's lonely opening complaint here is functionally equivalent to the already widely familiar Sufi poetic image of the perpetually alienated and romantically longing "nightingale"—hopelessly singing the beauties of its unattainable divine Rose—that openly emerges only at line 29.

[35] Here and throughout Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, it is essential for Western readers to keep in mind that the recurrent symbolism of "veiling" refers to what can be safely "seen through" in all the endlessly unfolding theophanies of the divine Beauty and other Names, not to any simple blocking of our spiritual vision. The classical scriptural source for this guiding theophanic insight is the well-known "Ḥadīth of the Veils": "God has seventy thousand [or 70/700] veils of light and darkness: if He were to remove them, the radiant splendors of His Face would burn up whoever was reached by His Gaze."

longing lover; and finally as the reed's true soul-mate, the "breath-giving/breath-playing" (*dam-sāz*) Musician behind the reed's song.

In section 6, of course, Rūmī's eloquent praise and celebration of Love restores "our" awareness of the full divine reality of Love, as that can only be perceived by fellow lovers (line 26). The archetypal theophanic experiences of Moses and Muḥammad allusively evoke and briefly summarize the heights of Love's spiritually curative effects—which continue to be elaborated in the longer concluding section. Ultimately the cosmic divine reality discussed here is that first so problematically encountered in section 3. But the poet's (and reader's) perspective in relation to the effective reality and presence of that all-encompassing creative and redemptive Love has shifted completely here, as though from night to day.

Sections 4 and 5: The inner connection between these two shorter central sections is essentially practical, and in this case quite visible and understandable. As section 4 reminds us, our unforgettable moments of theophanic encounter with the divine Friend, whatever their outward forms and occasions, inevitably give rise afterwards to a sense of tormenting attachment, painful loss, and unsatisfied longing—demoralizing states of the fragile ego-reed that could readily drag us back to all the familiar short-sighted egoistic distractions and other dead-ends that were more elaborately evoked in the opening sections. And Rūmī's cryptic challenge to each reader at this midpoint of this poem (line 18) suggests that for many, that frustrating return to the lonely reed-world and its mournful musical solace may often seem inevitable. But section 5 suddenly opens up the alternative, necessarily *practical* prospect of undertaking the lengthy purifying work and gradual detachment of the faithful and devoted lover[36]—while highlighting the necessary catalytic role of grace in making possible that transformation.

In each of these four nested pairs of linked sections it is important to keep in mind that the actual individual spiritual process demanded by these comparisons is a reality quite different from the mere intellectual articulation of the visible differences between these two parallel states or conditions—even if that reflection and understanding may constitute an essential first step in this process. Instead, what is really revealed by this

[36] Here, at line 22, it is particularly important to be aware of all the interrelated symbolic references to the process of spiritual growth and perfection included in the Qur'ānic image (already familiar from the Gnostic "Hymn of the Pearl") of the "Pearl" of the fully realized human soul. The oyster-shell of the body, immersed in the "bitter" salt-water of material-temporal existence, was understood to open up at special rare moments to a single pure "rain-drop" of the Spirit and Grace, which then required ages of incubation and perseverance (*ṣabr*) to arrive at its ultimate perfection.

contrasting parallelism, in each case, is a kind of specifically existential "mystery": that is, the deeper challenge of understanding and realizing within ourselves this dramatic shift in perspective. The eventual results of each of these pairs of contrasting spiritual states may be unmistakably visible, but the actual deeper workings and inner development underlying those transformations force us to focus more directly on our own cognate personal experiences and moments of unexpected illumination and insight—and on the sustained and quietly determined inner work underlying them—which eventually help give rise to such dramatic and initially unsuspected inner changes.

IV. From Grammar to Metaphysics: Realizing the *Mathnawī*'s Unifying Themes

The entire movement of the Song of the Reed could be very simply summed up as the mysteriously unfolding development of the Spirit from an apparently solitary, alienated, and embittered ego; through a series of transforming encounters with Love (the "Thou"/you of all the divine/human Friends and Beloveds) to its destined realization as the "W/we" of the Spirit that lives and acts within the fuller awareness of that One creative Love. Each of this poem's four pairs of chiasmically linked sections together dramatizes and highlights one key dimension or manifestation of that ongoing, revelatory transformation.

But here one basic caution is also in order. Rūmī, throughout the *Mathnawī*, rigorously and quite self-consciously avoids the familiar kind of systematic, didactic allegorization which is so obvious in his well-known Persian poetic predecessors, such as 'Aṭṭār and Sanā'ī.[37] The recurrent danger which he systematically works to avoid at every turn in this epic is that such familiar ways of writing ultimately lead their readers to remain at the primarily intellectual level of simply "recognizing" and aesthetically appreciating the refined artistic representation of teachings and truths with which they were already quite familiar. Readers have only to turn to a carefully close reading of the final story-cycle of Book I (the saga of 'Alī's forgiveness of his opponent in battle, his enemy's sudden

[37] Those who have read through even a single Book of the *Mathnawī* quickly discover that Rūmī is constantly playing with our natural human tendency to expect some comforting allegorical regularity and constancy in his use of particular images and symbols—so that the "hero" (real or self-proclaimed) of one story often becomes the dupe or villain of another. (This literary process closely mirrors filmmakers' familiar use today of often ironic and humorous, but meaningful allusions to familiar scenes from earlier classics.)

illumination, and the mysterious "passion" of 'Alī's servant and eventual assassin) to see how Rūmī, within every section of that cycle, is constantly moving back and forth, often within every few lines, through the different alternating perspectives and stages of the overall movement so systematically orchestrated in the Song of the Reed.[38]

The guiding purpose of all these challenging metaphysical and poetic complexities, however, is quite clear. What happens in each of those stories and reflections is that a homiletic popular story or teaching which Rūmī's reader naturally expects to express, in poetic guise, a familiar and externally considered didactic point,[39] is instead subtly "reversed" or turned upside-down. The result is that each unsuspecting new reader suddenly finds, at some point in that process, that the whole purpose of that section was instead to catch and draw out certain practically crucial, but previously unconscious aspects of the reader's own soul and deepest patterns of conceiving God, the world, and our own destined place in that ongoing drama. In other words, every story and passage in the *Mathnawī* eventually turns out to be an exquisitely shifting mirror designed to "catch the conscience of the King." In the religious and philosophical sciences of Rūmī's day, this distinctive way of teaching and learning was described as *taḥqīq*:[40] a term which means simultaneously "realizing" (spiritually and intellectually) what is in fact true; while likewise "actualizing" in ongoing reality (both in spirit and in deed) that truth which was previously simply believed or formally accepted, or which had remained even more profoundly unconscious. The enduring appeal and lasting fascination of this *Spiritual Mathnawī*, across so many centuries and despite all the inevitable further losses in translation, has everything to do with Rūmī's extraordinary creative mastery of this rhetoric of realization.

[38] This particularly fluid and indeterminate rhetorical aspect of the *Mathnawī* offers remarkable similarities with the often untranslatable Arabic poems of Ibn 'Arabī (in his *Futūḥāt* and elsewhere), where each line must often be read from two or three different—but ultimately complementary and indispensable—metaphysical perspectives.

[39] Something of the ecumenical range of earlier literary, philosophical, and religious sources for Rūmī's tales and imagery in the *Mathnawī*—most of them somewhat familiar to his contemporaries, or at least to those learned readers culturally at home (like himself) in both Arabic and Persian—can be gathered from Nicholson's extensive abstracts (in his commentaries) of earlier Islamic commentators, Furūzānfar's *Mā'khaz-i qiṣaṣ wa tamthīlāt-i Mathnawī*, and especially the slowly expanding body of available translations in Western languages from his classical Persian poetic predecessors.

[40] A key expression that we have elsewhere translated as "spiritual intelligence": see the extensive study of this distinctive spiritual and literary practice in our work cited at n. 30 above.

However, there is one more critical feature of Rūmī's distinctive artistic language that ultimately can only be approximated or externally described, since its actual workings have to be experienced repeatedly in order to become clear: that is the mysterious transforming element of spiritual intuition or inspiration. Just as with so many celebrated verses and chapters of the Qur'ān, Rūmī's rapid and unexplained shifting of metaphysical and contextual perspectives secretly draws the actively engaged reader into a kind of bewildering impasse. Indeed the very complexity of those existentially compelling considerations—throughout Book I, for example, Rūmī's ongoing theological insistence on both divine determination and individual free will and responsibility; or the intertwined mysteries of bodily death, mortality, evil, and suffering that connect each story-cycle—eventually leads his readers into deep inner bewilderment (*ḥayra*) that cannot be resolved simply by intellectual means.[41] It is precisely at that crucial point that this disorienting inner puzzlement is answered by an illumination, an unexpected inner change of state or new consideration that opens up, in a profoundly convincing way, an enduringly changed perspective or resolution which is both existential and intelligible.

In what may be a helpful analogy, this characteristic experience of discovery when studying the *Mathnawī* over time closely mirrors the common experience of that particularly memorable aspect of prayer which many Sufi writers, before and after Rūmī, have vividly described as *ilqā'*: as the sudden divine "throwing" or emergence into our momentarily receptive consciousness—just as in an indubitably spiritual dream or vision—of a particularly apt illuminating verse of the Qur'ān (or a similarly transformative insight or intuition) which is the immediate response to our current state and need.

It is against that wider backdrop that we can appreciate one final preparatory role of the Song of the Reed: this prelude is Rūmī's carefully open-ended first introduction to many of the practically central leitmotifs and perspectives of the entire *Mathnawī*. What is important here is that each of these basic considerations and their symbolic exemplifications introduced here does not simply provide significant unifying literary and theological themes, but rather that Rūmī here is providing his readers with

[41] The centrality (and relative rarity) of this spiritual station of *ḥayra* is discussed in detail in all of the recent studies of Ibn 'Arabī's historically influential thought, but its most accessible literary representation can perhaps be found in the available translations of 'Aṭṭār's renowned account of the "Seven Valleys of Love" in his *Conference of the Birds* (*Manṭiq al-ṭayr*)—a book which (along with 'Aṭṭār's *Ilāhī-nāma*) exercised a profound influence on Rūmī's *Mathnawī*.

a much smaller set of guiding "touchstones" that we can use to gauge our actual personal relation to his teachings at any point in this epic.

◊ The first of these constant touchstones, introduced already in the poem's opening line, is the familiar spectrum of relative separation and reunion or proximity with the divine Beloved. Rūmī's Song of the Reed opens with the apparent opposition of these experiential poles, in which the reality and presence of the all-encompassing divine Love and Compassion is at first known and perceived only through the reed's desolate egoistic sense of loss, conflict, longing, and separation. But Rūmī quickly moves on to the dynamic revelation of all the mediating, motivating, and transforming influences of that Love: these include the divine "You," all the divine "Friends" and guides,[42] their Water (of Life), and the personal Path that eventually emerges through those lifelong encounters and alternating subjective states of apparent separation and proximity. And even a small amount of reflection on our cycling between these two polar conditions—above all as constantly encountered in everyday life, not just while reading this epic—quickly reveals the immense spectrum and variation of each soul's movements and conscious states along that Path.

◊ A second dynamic and far-reaching touchstone introduced here, which quickly becomes the dramatic heart of the following story-cycle of the love-struck King and his mysteriously ailing maidservant, is the soul's gradual discovery and appreciation of the divine Cure, Healer, and Friend, in all their infinitely varied manifestations. This discovery only becomes possible through the humanly embodied spirit's ineluctable suffering—and especially through the purifying "fires" of loss, estrangement, longing, tears, and inner perseverance which are inherent in that mortal condition.

◊ The third, equally universal touchstone arising here—again already present in the opening line—is the intimate divine/human need for communication and creative expression, for shared, interactive "speech" (or Music) and for the equally indispensable receptive dimension of empathic, contemplative "listening." Understandably, this symbolic matrix—and its central vivifying dynamic of divine

[42] See the related notes to the translation below on *walāya* (divine "Friendship," Guidance, Protection, Mediation) and the saintly *awliyā'*.

Love and human need—is in reality inseparable from the following theme of divine/human companionship, grace, and guidance (*walāya*).

◊ One of the most intimate and essential dimensions of each soul's path is of course the touchstone of the divine protecting and guiding "Friend" (*al-Walī*). The centrality of this multifaceted reality in Rūmī's spiritual vision and teaching is reflected in the profusion of intertwined synonyms introduced already here in these few opening lines: *yār*, *walī*, *dūst*, *hamrāh*, *hamzabān*, *damsāz*—as well as in the constant flow of allusion (and the sudden surprising interjection of open addresses) to the central figures of Shams-i Tabrīz (or Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī) in Rūmī's own personal love-story. Fortunately, the full dimensions of this transformative autobiographical dimension of the *Mathnawī* can now be much more directly grasped through the recent availability of two English translations of the transcribed teaching-sessions of Shams, with their revealing and colorful amplifications in Aflākī's later voluminous and influential hagiography.[43]

◊ Finally, perhaps the most intimate and multi-faceted touchstone of all is the complex of allusions—almost all of them ultimately Qur'ānic in origin and wider semantic context—which Rūmī introduces to convey the ever-present polarities and possibilities of the Heart. Here this spiritual locus of all perception and awareness, as throughout the Qur'ān, is at once "our" heart and the Heart of all Being, both the divine Names and their human reflections. These central symbolic sets include, in just these opening lines: Love, the soul's innermost secret or mystery (*sirr*), Light, Spirit, Sea, mirror, Pearl, "inside"—as well as all their intrinsic corollaries ("outside," rust, body, corpse, veils, senses, alienation, reflection, senses, wind). All the inescapable polarities which, taken together, make this singularly fragile and broken reed the fully theomorphic instrument of that Heart's endlessly unfolding Song.

[43] See *Rūmī's Sun*, trans. C. Helminski and R. Algan (Sandpoint, ID: Morning Light Press, 2008), and *Me and Rūmī: The Autobiography of Shams-i Tabrīz*, trans. W. Chittick (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2004). Both translations are explicitly incomplete, given the great difficulties posed by the surviving Persian text of Shams' *Maqālāt*. Aflākī's invaluable later hagiographic compilation of stories surrounding Rūmī, Shams, and other key figures in the nascent Mevlevi movement is now also available in a full English translation by John O'Kane, *The Feats of the Knowers of God: Manāqeb al-'ārefīn* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

Literal Version of the "Song of the Reed" (verses 1-35)[44]

[Section 1: line 1 (Narrator to *singular* reader)]

[1] **Listen** (sing.) to the reed/flute,[45] as it recounts a story,
complaining of separations:

[Section 2: lines 2-7 (Reed/flute's soliloquy)]

[2] "Ever since they tore **me** from the reed-garden,
men and women have been weeping at **my** cry.

[3] **I** want a chest torn open,[46] torn open by separation,[47]
so that [for such a listener?][48] **I** can give expression to the pain of longing!

[4] Each person who remains far from his/her own Source/root
is seeking after the destined-Day of their Reunion.[49]

[44] This intentionally literal version (also adhering closely to the original phrasing and word order) is adapted from both Nicholson and the recent verse translation of Book I by Alan Williams, *Rūmī: Spiritual Verses, The First Book of the* Masnavi-ye ma'navi (London: Penguin Books, 2006). For the analytical purposes developed in section I above, we have highlighted certain key grammatical markers and also added in square brackets our tentative identifications of the main sections and the possible speakers and audiences in the different sections.

[45] Throughout this opening poem, it is important keep in mind both meanings of the Persian *nay* here: as both the fragile, dead flute (or even the reed-pen, at line 27) and the living reed from which it is made. These two senses correspond to the twofold Qur'ānic account of the origination of humanity, as both the celestial, eternal spirit (at VII:172; see n. 8 above) later breathed into Adam, and the mortal bodily (and similarly tube-like) human form, created of "stinking clay."

[46] See n. 24 above for the Qur'ānic resonances (XCIV:1-8) of this image and its multiple contrasting, but interrelated senses here. While we have kept the literal "chest" (*sīna*, Qur'ānic *ṣadr*) in English here, in the Qur'ān this term refers to the outermost dimension or covering of the "Heart" (*qalb*), which is the locus of all the levels and forms of human perception and cognition (i.e., not at all restricted to emotion and feeling).

[47] Here *firāq* is the Arabic synonym of *jidā'ī* in the opening line, usually referring more specifically in poetry to one's separation from the longed-for Beloved.

[48] See note 24 above for a more detailed explanation of the complex possible meanings of the Persian here.

[49] Although we have not interrupted the quotation of the reed's complaint here, this entire line 5, without any first-person marker, seems to shift into a very different, proverbial voice of wisdom, as though Rūmī is already interjecting a wiser, deeper context for the reed's initial feelings of loss and longing. Such mysterious and unexpected interjections or

[5] **I** was weeping in every gathering:
I joined with those who were sad and with those who were happy.

[6] Each person, from their own supposition, (imagined) he became **my** Friend[50]—
(yet) none sought **my** secrets from within **me**.

[7] **My** secret[51] is not far from **my** weeping—
but the (bodily) eye and ear do not have *that* Light!"[52]

[Section 3: lines 8-15 ([same?] narrator to everyone)]

[8] Body is not veiled from soul,[53] nor soul from body—
yet no one is permitted to see the soul.[54]

[9] *Fire* is this cry of the reed; it isn't (mere) wind:
whoever lacks *this* fire, may he become nothing![55]

sudden "jumps" to a higher metaphysical perspective are in fact common throughout the *Mathnawī*—as they are in the Qur'ān.

[50] *Yār* here is the first of a large number of Persian expressions in this opening poem (all familiar from earlier Persian mystical poets) corresponding to facets of the central Arabic notion of *al-Walī*: both the divine Name and Attribute designating God's "closeness" and protecting, guiding "proximity" to all creation, and more specifically all those divine "Friends" and Mediators (*awliyā' Allāh*, in the Qur'ānic expression) who are the instruments and mediators of God's protection, guidance, and eventual salvation, both in this world and in higher realms.

[51] *Sirr* is a key Qur'ānic expression referring to one of the innermost dimensions of the human Heart; "mystery" or "essence" may come closer to conveying that aspect of spiritual psychology.

[52] Rūmī (or the reed) here uses specifically (among many more mundane Persian expressions for light) the highly charged Qur'ānic expression and divine Name (XXIV:35 ff.) *al-Nūr*—a term originally referring to moonlight, and hence to all the theophanies of the divine Sun "reflected" in the planes of creation. Thus its symbolic role and nature here is very close to the parallel imagery of the divine "Spirit" or "Breath" (*rūḥ*) in the Qur'ānic symbolism of God's creative Speech and Music that runs throughout this opening poem.

[53] *Jān* is also "Life" and (through its equivalence to the Arabic *nafs*/*nafas*) the soul or "life-breath" quickening and illuminating the human body.

[54] Rūmī's expression here directly echoes the well-known verse from the Qur'ān: "The vision (of the eyes) does not perceive/encompass Him, but He encompasses that vision" (VI:103)—reminding his readers of the repeated Qur'ānic contrast between human beings' vast potential power of spiritual insight (*baṣīra*) and the sharply limited scope of the physical eyes' visual range (*baṣar*: originally the "visual ray" thought to emanate from the eye in the process of ocular vision).

[55] There is a serious pun here between the everyday sense of this idiom ("may he just

[10] *Fire* is Love that has fallen into the reed,
Love's boiling-ferment, fallen into the wine.

[11] The reed is the partner of whoever is torn away from Friendship/a Friend:[56]
its notes/His veils have torn ***our*** veils apart.[57]

[12] Who has seen a poison and a cure-all like the reed?
Who has seen an intimate-friend (*damsāz*) and a longing-lover like the reed?

[13] The reed tells the legend of a Path full of blood/suffering:
tells the tales of crazy (Majnun's) Love.[58]

[14] The only intimate/worthy of *this* understanding is the "senseless" one:[59]
there is no buyer for the tongue but the ear.

[15] In **our**[60] grieving, the days are out of place [= resemble nights]:
the days travel the Path together with burning (sorrows).

disappear") and Rūmī's repeated emphasis—here in the *Mathnawī* and throughout his poetry, following 'Aṭṭār and many earlier Sufi writers—on the state of ego-less "nothingness" (*nīstī* and *hīch*) as the very highest human spiritual condition of absolute surrender and pure servanthood (*'ubūdiyya*).

[56] *Yārī*: see n. 50 (line 6) above. This term (equivalent of the abstract Arabic *walāya*) is both the inner state of the saints or "Friends of God" and the wider reality of all the effective expressions of God's divine Assistance, Grace, Help, Protection, and Caring.

[57] The Persian *parda* here refers both to musical "melodies" or frets on an instrument, and to "veils." As explained at n. 35 above, the latter reading alludes to widely cited Ḥadīth of God's 70,000 Veils, which contrasts the translucently revealing "veils" of divine Creation with the obscurities of our human supposition.

[58] Both terms for a spiritually significant story used here (*ḥadīth* and *qiṣaṣ*, directly echoing the Sura of Joseph, XII:3) have strong religious and Qur'ānic overtones. Majnūn is both "crazy" (the literal meaning of the original Arabic) and the archetype of the purely devoted lover in the popular love-story of Laylā and Majnūn.

[59] Here (and further at line 26 below), Rūmī is following a long-established Sufi understanding of the Qur'ānic account of Moses' swooning at Mt. Sinai (". . . I fell down stunned," VII:143) as an allusion to the lofty spiritual state of *fanā'*, the "dissolving of the ego" within its divine Source.

[60] If one reads this line in light of Rūmī's passionate evocation of his grief and loss in so many of his shorter lyrical works, then it is hard not to read this "our" as a possibly autobiographical reference. In any event, how one understands this "our" inevitably colors one's sense of the identity of the speaker responding in the following line 16.

[Section 4: lines 16-18 (Rūmī to God/Shams?)[61]]

[16] If days have gone, say "**Go!**"[62]—it doesn't matter:
You stay! O **You**, whose Purity none can match![63]

[17] Everyone but a fish becomes satiated with His Water;
whoever is without H/his daily bread,[64] their day becomes long.

[18: exact center of poem] No one who is raw can understand the state of the cooked:
so (this) word must be short—and farewell in Peace (*salām*)!

[Section 5: lines 19-22 (Rūmī to *single* reader)]

[19] Break **your** chains and be free, o **son**!
How long will **you** be enslaved to gold and to silver?

[20] If **you** should pour the Sea into a pitcher,
What part of that will it hold? One day's worth!

[21] The pitcher of the greedy ones' eye can't be filled;
as long as the oyster-shell is not content, it can't be filled with pearl.[65]

[22] Whoever's clothes have been torn apart by a Love/Loving,
they will be pure of greed and every fault.[66]

[61] There are several ways of imagining the speaker(s) and who is being addressed in these central lines, though all of them include the reader, as the implicit "witness" of this dialogue.

[62] The Persian imperative here is singular and intensely personal.

[63] This final half-line seems to echo the emphasis on the divine uniqueness in the familiar Sura *Ikhlāṣ* (CXII:4).

[64] The Qur'ānic term *rizq* suggested here refers in fact to all the forms of divine support and sustenance.

[65] See the full explanation of the complex symbolism presupposed here, at n. 36 above.

[66] Here the imagery of clothing and nakedness reflects the familiar contrast of spiritual humility and true servanthood ("nothingness"/ *nīstī* at n. 55 above), as opposed to the ego's normal attachment to all its inner and outer accoutrements of apparent "being" (*hastī*). The imagery of the passionate lover here no doubt also alludes to the Qur'ānic account of Joseph and Zulaykhā (at XII:25-27), and to the eventual sartorial consequences of that encounter.

[Section 6: lines 23-26 (Rūmī (for *"us"*) to Love)]

[23] Rejoice, O Love, our happy passion/trade,[67]
O Physician for *all* **our** many illnesses!

[24] O Cure for **our** egoism and pretension,
O You who are **our** Plato and **our** Galen![68]

[25] Because of Love, the earthly body soared to heaven;
the Mount (Sinai) started to dance and became nimble.[69]

[26] When Love came to Sinai's soul, **o lover**,
Sinai became drunk and "*Moses fell down thunderstruck.*"

[Section 7: lines 27-34 (Rūmī intimately to the *single* reader)]

[27] If **I** were pressed to **my** intimate-friend's[70] lips,
then like **my** reed[71] **I'**d tell what must be told.

[28] Whoever is separated from the one who shares his tongue[72]
is speechless, though he have a hundred songs (to sing).

[29] And when the Rose is gone, the Garden faded: after that
you [*sing.*] will no longer *listen* to the adventures of the nightingale.

[67] The Persian here expresses a mix of intentionally contrasted meanings: *sawdā'* as melancholy and passion (a normally painful state of mind); and *sawdā* (without the final hamza) as a trade or transaction, alluding to the many Qur'ānic references to our short-sighted "selling" of our soul for illusory ends.

[68] In Rūmī's culture, these figures represent the two classical philosopher-healers (*hakīm*, as in the following story, refers to both philosophers and physicians), of spirit/soul and of body, respectively.

[69] See n. 27 above for a fuller explanation of the Qur'ānic and Ḥadīth allusions in these two lines to the spiritual journey of Muḥammad (as well as the ascensions of Jesus and Ilyās/Idrīs), together with the Qur'ānic account of Moses at Sinai.

[70] The literal sense of this key expression (first introduced at line 12) is both "breath-maker" and "breath-player," with each of those aspects applying both to the player of the reed and to the divine Source of the soul's Spirit-breath.

[71] See n. 28 above on the reed as the usual source of the pen (*qalam*) in Rūmī's day, suggesting "my reed" as a punning reference to the poet's own creative literary activity.

[72] While we have kept the most literal, linguistic sense of this term, it refers of course to all the manifold forms of deeper empathy and sympathetic understanding.

[30] All is the Beloved, the lover (but) a veil;
The Living One[73] is the Beloved, the lover a corpse:

[31] When Love is not caring/concerned for (the lover),
he is like a bird without wings—alas for him/her!

[32] **Me**, how can **I** understand (things) all around,
when/if **my** Friend's Light[74] is not all around?

[33] Love *wants* this Word to become manifest:
how can the mirror be without reflection?[75]

[34] Do **you** [sing.] know why **your** mirror has no reflection?
Because the rust has not been separated from its face.[76]

[Section 8: line 35 (Narrator to dear friends)]

[35] **Listen** (pl.) to this story, o beloved-friends!
it *is* itself the inner reality of **our** current state.

[73] The Persian here suggests one of the most central divine Names, *al-Ḥayy* (the Living, Source of Life), but also all those souls discovering their inner relation with that Life.

[74] See n. 52 (to line 7) above.

[75] The last word here is literally someone "winking back (seductively)" (*ghammāz*), a far more lively and mysteriously moving image than a mere abstract "reflection." These celebrated lines express an even more compressed version of the influential "Hidden Treasure" divine saying translated and discussed at note 13 above.

[76] This verse refers to the ongoing care and great effort required to polish pre-modern copper and brass mirrors. More specifically, this mirror-imagery in verses 33-34 involves a complex allusion to a number of Qur'ānic descriptions of the Heart (most notably LXXXIX:14, ". . . and what they were acquiring has rusted on their Hearts") and to the well-known Ḥadīth: "Hearts rust like iron, and their polishing is through the Remembrance of God and the recitation of the Qur'ān." See the fuller explanation of the many related Qur'ānic verses on the Heart in chapter 2 ("Listening: Contemplation and the Purified Heart") of our *The Reflective Heart*.

Wakened by the Dove's Trill: Structure and Meaning in the Preface to Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, Book IV

Carl W. Ernst

Beginnings are difficult, as all authors know. How should one start a complicated writing, in such a way that alert readers know how to interpret the text correctly? Plato is said to have rewritten the opening to his *Republic* many times. When an expert writer prefaces his work with a formal introduction, it is especially important to take that opening seriously, as an announcement of the purpose, context, and audience envisioned for the work. The introduction may be explicit, or it may fall back on allusive and indirect references, but in either case it arguably forms an essential part of the literary structure of the work. Here I would like to investigate one particular example of such an introduction, the preface to Book IV of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's *Mathnawī*. I am building on a previous analysis of the prefaces to the first three books of the *Mathnawī* and their relation to the opening dialogs with his disciple Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī, which are prominently featured at the beginning of each book.[1] There I argued that Rūmī uses these prefaces to set up his primary goal as a teacher of Sufism. That is, he wants to clarify the way in which language functions as a way to bring about the comprehension of a reality that is much larger than any concept. At the same time, he uses the dialogue form to highlight the shortcomings of language, together with the longing of spiritual aspirants who seek a way to overcome those limitations. Each of these prefaces plays variations on this theme of the adequacy of language and the transcendence of the divine reality, with powerful gestures towards the key roles played by both Rūmī's disciple Ḥusām al-Dīn and his spiritual mentor, Shams-i Tabrīz. The point is that Rūmī is a very deliberate author whose introductory gestures are extremely important for understanding the purpose of his symbolic declarations. Here I would like to argue that the same applies to the preface of Book IV of the *Mathnawī* as well, although it stands out by

[1] Carl W. Ernst, "'A Little Indicates Much': Structure and Meaning in the Prefaces to Rūmī's *Mathnawī*," in *Mawlana Rumi Review*, V (2014), pp. 14-25, which was a paper originally given at conference on "Wondrous Words: The Poetic Mastery of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī," sponsored by the Iran Heritage Foundation, British Museum, Sept. 13-15, 2007.

its citation of an Arabic poem of the Umayyad era that serves to evoke a passionate undertone that is crucial for understanding Rūmī's relationship with his Sufi associates. Book IV thus is distinctive in calling upon a love poem from the secular Arabic tradition to frame the Sufi dialogue in Persian that opens this section of the *Mathnawī*.

In Book I, Rūmī began with an extensive comparison between the *Mathnawī* and the Qur'ān, stressing how the brevity of its expression encompasses a world of meaning: "a little indicates much." He also praised Ḥusām al-Dīn, the instigator of the poem's composition, with an extravagance verging on parody, at the same time clarifying that the audience of the *Mathnawī* is an advanced spiritual elite. The opening dialogue with Ḥusām al-Dīn starts right after the song of the reed, and resumes after a break for the beginning of the first story. It contains powerful evocations of Shams-i Tabrīz as the ideal teacher and listener, who also demonstrates the inability of language to express reality directly, despite the unavoidable necessity of language. Stories of other people (*ḥadīth-i dīgarān*) emerge as the way to communicate spiritual truths indirectly. In a similar fashion, the preface to Book II dwells on the need for proportion and balance, which are paradoxically impossible in relation to the infinity of God and divine love. The opening dialogue focuses on the issue of companionship, again with strong references to Shams-i Tabrīz as the solar exemplar of living truth, and the mysterious relationship between lover and beloved.

The preface to Book III opens with a portrayal of the forms of divine wisdom that rule the universe, and the corresponding incapacity of the human intellect to comprehend them. But this human defect is caused by distractions that can be eliminated in those who are intent on only God; Rūmī closes this section with additional comparisons between the Qur'ān and the *Mathnawī* as vehicles of guidance. In the opening lines of verse, Ḥusām al-Dīn is alternately teased and praised, increasingly in terms stressing his similarity to Shams, as the "radiance" (*ḍiyā'*) derived from the sun. Rūmī deploys extensive comparisons involving bodily life, using the imagery of consumption, weaning, and the embryo to indicate the human condition. So far the emphasis has been on the nature of spiritual communication itself, the need for a perfect listener, and the inadequacy of all representations, yet Ḥusām al-Dīn is fully aware of these issues.

Book IV starts with a preface that (as with Books I and III) is in Arabic, though it is brief. It announces itself as "the fourth journey to the best of abodes," but the *Mathnawī* remains very much a book; reading it gives joy to the hearts of gnostics. The recitation of its virtues emphasizes its cosmic and salvific character; there are only indirect further allusions to its textual character, when it is called "the shout of the clouds" (*ṣawt*

al-ghimām) that thunderously announces the rain, or when we are told that its breast (or introduction, *ṣadr*) contains adornments not seen on gorgeous singers. In chains of rhyming prose, Rūmī declaims the power of the *Mathnawī* to heal, and he portrays it as the desire of seekers and the greatest gift, the renewer of affection and reliever of affliction, and the reward for those who know and act.

Rūmī quickly introduces the key symbols of the moon and sun, which seem to play directly on the identities of Ḥusām al-Dīn and Shams. Thus, the *Mathnawī* is like a rising moon and a returning fortune, increasing hope for the hopeful. Rūmī reiterates the point that the *Mathnawī* restores hope, utilizing the typical Sufi terms for the "expansion" (*basṭ*) of hope after its "contraction" (*inqibāḍ*, cf. *qabḍ*). Because now the *Mathnawī* is like the sun (*shams*) dawning among clouds dispersed, a light (*nūr*) to our companions and a treasure to our followers. Rūmī closes the section with a prayer to God for thanks, since gratitude is the source of the increase of all things.

At this point Rūmī makes a striking shift, quoting four verses from the early Umayyad poet 'Adī ibn al-Riqā', a panegyrist of the Caliph al-Walīd (d. 715). This invocation of an early Arabic poem stands out as a dramatic gesture, building upon the elegant literary effect created by the balanced rhyming phrases that precede it. As Nargis Virani has shown, Rūmī was an attentive reader of Arabic poetry, and himself composed many verses in Arabic.[2] What is the nature of this poetic citation, and what is the effect of its quotation? First let me quote the lines in question:

Wa-mimmā shajānī anna-nī kuntu nā'iman
U'allilu min bardin bi-ṭībi al-tanassumi
ilá an da'at warqā'u fī ghuṣni aykatin
tugharridu mubkāhā bi-ḥusni al-tarannumi
fa-law qabla mubkāhā bakaytu ṣabātan
li-su'dá shafaytu al-nafsa qabla al-tanaddumi
wa-lakinna bakat qablī fa-hayyaja lī al-bukā
bukāhā fa-qultu al-faḍlu lil-mutaqaddimi

Something that bothered me was once, while sleeping,
I was struck with the cool of a fragrant breeze,
Until a dove called out to me from the thicket's branch,

[2] Nargis Virani, "Multilinguality: A Dynamic and Unique Strategy for Apophatic Discourse," unpublished paper given at conference on "Wondrous Words: The Poetic Mastery of Jalāl al-Din Rūmī," British Museum, Sept. 13-15, 2007.

trilling its lament with a lovely song.
If I had just cried for Su'dā's love from longing,
before it cried, I'd have healed my soul before I felt remorse.
But it cried before me, its tears provoking mine.
So I said: the glory goes to the one who's first.

As Nicholson points out, these verses have been anthologized, notably in *al-Kāmil* by Mubarrad in the fourth/ tenth century, in what Nicholson calls "a more correct text."[3] It is not clear what classicizing impulse led Nicholson to make that judgment. A recent critical edition of that work cites only the last two verses that appear in Rūmī's preface, adding the first two verses in a footnote as marginal additions, with minor variants.[4] Surprisingly, these verses are still quite popular today, to judge from several versions found on the Internet containing the apparently complete *qaṣīda* of Ibn al-Riqā' (or Ibn Abī Maryam) from which it is taken, a poem otherwise attributed to Zayd ibn Mu'āwiya and others.[5] Nicholson rightly observed that the ordinary sense of the poem was the way that the dove's lament inspires the sleeping lover and kindles his longing by awakening him, but he pointed out that Rūmī allegorized this trope in a mystical sense; he further commented that "the verses, however, have a particular application to the preceding passage in which the *Mathnawī* is glorified. Rūmī hints, plainly enough for any one familiar with his style, that under God all credit for the spiritual power and holy influence of the poem is due to its originator and inspirer, Ḥusām al-Dīn."

So far so good, but I would like to suggest that Rūmī had in mind more of the poem than the few verses that he quoted. Although Nicholson dismissed the poem of Ibn al-Riqā' as "an ordinary *nasīb*" (erotic ode),

[3] *The Mathnawí of Jalālu'ddín Rúmí*, ed. Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (London: Luzac & Co., 1925; reprint ed., 1971), commentary on Bk. IV, vol. 8, p. 125.

[4] Abū al-'Abbās Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Dālī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1986), 3:1029. Line 1 reads, "I was struck by the breeze with the cool of sleep" (*min bard al-karā*) while line 2 has the dove "striking" (*turaddidu*) its lament.

[5] Cited on the Madrasat al-Mīzān lin-Naqd al-Adabī (The School of the Balance for Literary Criticism) website, http://www.1121.com/?LINK=Article&id=31, accessed 5 December 2007, where the verses cited by Rūmī are lines 16-19 out of 40; a copy of this file is also available at http://www.unc.edu/~cernst/research/adi.doc. This offers the variant in line 16: "I was struck with exceeding desire by the breeze" (*farṭ al-hawa bil-tanassum*), and it replaces the name of Su'dā with a pleonastic verb (*la-kuntu*). This poem is said to be from Ibn al-Riqā's *Dīwān*, published in Iraq; presumably this is *Dīwān shi'r 'Adī ibn al-Riqā' al-'Āmilī*, ed. Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā Tha'lab al-Shaybānī, Nūrī Ḥammūdī al-Qaysī, and Ḥātim Ṣāliḥ al-Ḍāmin (Baghdad: Maṭba'at Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1987).

the complete ode contains distinctive features that could well have been attractive to Rūmī, in which the poet raises the metaphorical descriptions of lovers to quasi-prophetic descriptions of remarkable boldness. It begins with the enquiry of a lover's friend, who compares the lover to an ecstatic pilgrim at the *ḥajj* pilgrimage:

> Do I see you cheerful like one enthralled, circumambulating the sides of the sacred place?
> An arrow's struck you, or you've suffered a glance, and this is nothing but a lovelorn trait (lines 1-2).

This question elicits in answer the complaint of the lover, who claims that his beloved is responsible for his death from longing, though he pleads that she should not be held guilty. She is an enchanting creature, described in Arabian terms as "refined of speech, Meccan within, Ḥijāzī about the eyes, and Ṭā'ifī in the mouth" (line 6). After confessing his jealousy even of her toothbrush and her clothes, and whatever is close to her, the lover (line 10) notices that her fingertips are red as though stained with henna, which he interprets as a sign of the enmity and disdain that she shows towards him. She replies (lines 12-15) by saying that his departure, when she was depending upon him, caused her to cry so much that when she wiped away her tears, her fingers were red with blood.

The four lines quoted by Rūmī are the lover's response to this reproach, in which he shifts into a reflective mood and confesses that the kindling of his passion was sparked by the dove's call; he claims still to be a lover, though evidently he needed a reminder. After his invocation of the dove and its passion, the lover goes on to say that he wept for her, "whose face enhances beauty, and has no peer, Arab or Persian" (line 20). Not only that, but she has extraordinary qualities resembling the prophets, to which he contrasts his own suffering, also using prophetic examples:

> She has the wisdom of Luqman, the form of Joseph, the song of David, and the purity of Mary,
> The speech of Ishmael in every melody, and the kingdom of Solomon son of David; realize this!
> But I have Jacob's sadness, and the lowliness of Jonah, the sufferings of Job, and the wildness of Adam (lines 21-23).

The lover goes on to compare the houris of paradise unfavorably to her, and he proclaims that he will never leave her. Then he announces, just barely restraining the audacity of his boast:

I then recalled in the Qur'ān the sura of Joseph, and what the Merciful One told of Joseph the brave.
So she was Zulaykhā on the day I was like Joseph, although [Joseph] the Prophet of God was the best of the noble (lines 31-32).

The poet here evidently hopes that his beloved will attempt to seduce him, as Zulaykhā tried to do with Joseph in the Qur'ānic account. After further protestations of his love, the lover makes clear that the implicitly Arabian location is in fact the sacred territory of Mecca, in a daring boast: "By God! If it were not for God, and fear and hope, I would have embraced her right between Ḥaṭīm and Zamzam!" (line 35). Even covering her with kisses there may be alright, because "this is lawful (*ḥalāl*) to me, for I am no relation (*maḥram*)" (line 37). The poem then winds down in a conclusion where the lover sees once again a dove cooing its forlorn passion, and he realizes that he is afflicted with an incurable malady of love.

Reflecting on the sense and imagery of the ode of Ibn al-Riqā', it seems plausible that its use by Rūmī is another example of the Sufi appropriation of the secular court poetry of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid eras, in which the combination of near-blasphemy and intense emotional coloring provided just the right amount of aesthetic shock to satisfy the mystics.[6] The dove of the poem is no doubt a direct reference to Ḥusām al-Dīn, whose sympathetic presence powerfully incites the longing that Rūmī expresses here. The dove (*warqā'*) is indeed the turning point of the poem, as is appropriate with a bird that commonly served as a messenger, thus inevitably becoming an intermediary between lovers.[7] Indeed, Warqā' was the name of one of the lovers in the eleventh-century Persian *Mathnawī* poem, *Warqā' u Gulshāh* by 'Ayyūqī (d. ca. 1030). The verses announcing the dove's appearance, moreover, take on a semi-prophetic tone, as the narrator sinks into sleep, so that his perception of what follows has the dream-like quality that Muslim thinkers viewed as a partial approximation of prophetic revelation. Thus for the "full-knowing reader," the allusions packed into these Arabic verses would be enough to stimulate a line of thinking that would draw attention to spiritual tensions

[6] For examples of Sufi use of secular Arabic poetry, see my *Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997), chapter 6, pp. 147-178.

[7] F. Viré, "Ḥamām," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2008), Brill Online, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 30 November 2008, http://www.brill-lonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-2656.

beyond what was explicitly contained in the few verses that appeared upon the page.[8]

On the formal level of Ibn al-Riqā's poem considered as a whole, the verses quoted by Rūmī serve as a central hinge between the standard repartee between lovers in the first half, and the strikingly audacious religious language of the second half (although the *ḥajj* imagery is anticipated by the opening line). And the dove returns to accompany the concluding coda, reflecting on the incurable character of love. But what rhetoricians call the unspoken "third persona,"[9] who inevitably comes to mind although he is not expressly mentioned, is undoubtedly Shams-i Tabrīz; he is clearly evoked in Rūmī's mention of the sun (*shams*) just before quoting the Arabic verses. Shams, I would suggest, is the unspoken parallel to the prophetically described beloved in the Arabic poem, and the intensity of Rūmī's passion is aptly signaled by the imagined encounter in the precincts of the holy shrine of the Ka'ba. In short, the verses of Ibn al-Riqā' fit remarkably well as a subtle echo of the spiritual roles of both Ḥusām al-Dīn and Shams-i Tabrīz for the audience of the *Mathnawī*. An audience accustomed to esoteric readings, and to seeking "the secret of beloveds" in stories about other people, would have the aptitude to make connections with the unquoted lines of the poem.

Rūmī concludes the preface with phrases that seem to continue the indirect invocation of Ḥusām al-Dīn and Shams: "God have mercy on those who are first, and those who are later; those who achieve, and those who make others achieve." The preface closes with a litany of divine names, including Jacob's words to his sons, "He is the best as protector, for He is the most merciful of the merciful ones" (Qur'ān 12:64); the last lines focus on God as the one who cares for all humanity, followed by blessings on the Prophet.

The introductory Persian verses of Book IV, comprising a relatively short section of 36 lines, play on many of the themes announced in the Arabic preface, such as the gratitude that leads to increase, and particularly the lights representing the spiritual personalities of Ḥusām al-Dīn and Shams.[10] The opening section (IV:1-9) is a direct address to Ḥusām al-Dīn, who is hailed by his epithet "radiance of truth," by whose light the

[8] Joseph Michael Pucci, *The Full-knowing Reader: Allusion and the Power of the Reader in the Western Literary Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[9] Philip Wander, "The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn in Rhetorical Theory," *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (1984), pp. 197-216.

[10] All citations are to Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī, *Mathnawī*, ed. Muḥammad Isti'lāmī (Tehran: Zavvār, 1370 A.Hsh./1991).

Mathnawī has surpassed the moon. It is his lofty concentration that takes the *Mathnawī* to a destination that he alone knows; somewhat humorously, he is depicted as yanking the *Mathnawī* along by the neck. Ḥusām al-Dīn is the invisible leader of the *Mathnawī*, and since he is its origin (*mabda'*), he is told, "If it increases, you have increased it" (IV:5); because of his proximity to God, it takes shape as he desires. Rūmī expresses the nexus between the classical Islamic virtue of gratitude for favor (*shukr al-ni'ma*) and the consequential increase of blessings, as stated for instance in Qur'ān 14:7, "if you give thanks, you will indeed be increased." In this way Rūmī personifies the *Mathnawī*:

> The *Mathnawī* has a thousand thanks for you, raising its hands in prayer and thanks.
> By its lips and hands, God sought your thanks, gave you glory, and proclaimed increasing grace (IV:8-9).

After further refinements on the theme of increase and thankfulness (IV:10-12), Rūmī returns again to Ḥusām al-Dīn, who is urged to pull the caravan of the *Mathnawī* towards its pilgrimage—but not just a pilgrimage to the house, rather to the Lord of the House (IV:14-15). It is hard to know from these descriptions whether Ḥusām al-Dīn's role was primarily to stimulate Rūmī to keep writing the *Mathnawī*, or whether these words signify that he had any active part in its planning and composition.

At this point Rūmī again recalls emphatically the names of light, as mentioned in the Qur'ān (10:5): "He is the one who made the sun (*shams*) into radiance (Arabic *ḍiyā'*) and the moon into a light (*nūr*)." He also plays with the Persian equivalents of these words. Since Ḥusām al-Dīn, the "radiance" of God, now also merits the title of being called the sun (*khvurshīd*), in principle this raises the question of his relation to Shams. Rūmī dwells on this theme at length (IV:16-24), reflecting a certain tension between the Qur'ānic identification of the terms and the very personal way he has used these names to distinguish his two very different spiritual interlocutors.

> Since the sun is higher than the moon, know that radiance outranks the light.
> Many have lost their way by moonlight, but when the sun came up, that was clear.
> The sun (*āftāb*) shows defects perfectly—that's why they have markets in the day,
> So that the heart and good cash become clear, so that they remain far from guile and tricks.

This last digression into market symbolism causes Rūmī to rank this truth-clarifying light with the Qur'ānic epithet, "a mercy for creation" (XXI:107), from this perspective collapsing both Ḥusām al-Dīn and Shams into the providential function of the Prophet Muḥammad. He spends five more lines (IV:25-29) musing on the cheats and thieves who are the enemy of the light.

Light and its origin, the sun, return once more to the center, as Rūmī approaches the final charge for this volume (IV:30-31), assigning to Book IV the celestial position held by the Sun in traditional cosmology:

> Pour brightness on Book IV, for the Sun (*āftāb*) has arisen from the fourth heaven!
> Here, Sun-like (*khvurshīdvār*), give light from the fourth [heaven], so it shines over lands and regions.

This command to Ḥusām al-Dīn, which is at the same time an invocation of the presence of Shams, metamorphoses these two spiritual lights into the text of the *Mathnawī*, which like the sun shines on everyone. "It's fiction for those who read it as fiction, but for one who sees, it's cash is truly manly" (IV:32). The imagery of light must take into account those who choose to see darkness. Rūmī lingers obsessively on those who are perverted in their perceptions, like the Egyptians who saw the Nile as blood. Thus he concludes by evoking the imaginal form (*mumaththal*) that is the suitable eschatological recompense for such deniers:

> The enemy of this discourse now appears in the mind's eye hanging upside down in hellfire.
> You've seen his state, Ḍiyā' al-Ḥaqq! God has shown you the answer to his deeds.
> Master, since the hidden vision is hidden, make this gift of sight increase in this world (IV:34-36).

After this somber note, the introductory lines shift to recall the last story of Book III, which needs now to be completed.

So how does the Arabic preface to Book IV relate to the dialogue in the opening Persian verses? I have argued that the introductions to each of the first three books simultaneously proclaim the power of the word, specifically the *Mathnawī*, to create spiritual transformation, while at the same time reflecting on the limitations of those words, and the extensive parts of creation that try not to see the light. Moreover, this hide-and-seek quality of language is inseparable, in Rūmī's own experience, from the

spiritual companions—Ḥusām al-Dīn and Shams-i Tabrīz—who personified that same energy that is manifest in the *Mathnawī*. Book IV seems to follow that pattern fairly closely. In this sense, Rūmī adhered to a certain extent to the model of the introduction in Arabic literature (*muqaddima*), which had evolved to constitute a three-part literary genre consisting of the invocation of the name of God (*basmala*), the statement for the reasons for composing the book, and the closing lines of praise.[11] Yet in other respects, Rūmī breaks out of the conventional mold for the literary introduction, which often features stereotyped expressions of modesty and praise for patrons. That is, the form of this introduction is highly personal, and it encodes symbols known to an elite audience of Sufis (particularly Ḥusām al-Dīn) who had intensely personal connections to Rūmī and Shams. The opening of the introduction presents the *Mathnawī* itself as the supreme manifestation of spiritual power. The Arabic verses quoted from Ibn al-Riqā' most likely were well known in this circle, and they would have triggered associations with the complete ode from which they were drawn, further enhancing the role of Ḥusām al-Dīn as the inspiration for the text. The opening section of Persian verse that precedes the first story of Book IV continues with the theme of gratitude for Ḥusām al-Dīn's role, and they also juxtapose Ḥusām al-Dīn and Shams as the two sources of light that can overcome the darkness in humanity.

Yet it is extraordinary to juxtapose the very different stylistic registers of these two sections. The Arabic preface has a coolly composed and elegant surface, yet the allusion buried in its refined quotation of a verse, which was already five centuries old in Rūmī's time, still beats with passionate emotion today. The intimate and even jocular tone of the Persian dialogue with Ḥusām al-Dīn carries with it a dark recognition of the negative aspects of creation. In the space marked out by these two formal gestures, Rūmī is able to present his spiritual teachings with remarkable freedom, so that his audience grasps their power despite the inadequacies of language.

[11] P. Freimark, "Muḳaddima," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2008), Brill Online, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 30 November 2008, http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-5453.

Spiritual Progression in Books One and Two of the *Mathnawī*

SIMON WEIGHTMAN

In another place,[1] I have pointed out how it was found in the *Mathnawī* that Mawlānā had hidden the inner organization of his work in at least two particular ways. First, although he has clearly marked the beginning and end of each book, he has not given the books titles which would have helped the reader to see where the work was going. Second, within each book, the only divisions of his text are provided by the headings, almost certainly his own, which effectively divide the text into headed sections, 173 in Book One and 111 in Book Two. It would have been possible, even expected, for Mawlānā to have grouped these headed sections into larger units, *maqāla*s or discourses, and even to have given these discourses titles, but he chose not to do so. In a previous paper[2] it was shown how the identification of the discourses can easily be done for Book One because the discourses are nearly all stories linking the sections of which they are composed through narrative unity. *Figure One* shows the outcome, which is the one most readers would arrive at independently were they to undertake such an exercise.

This diagram shows Book One as being constituted by twelve discrete discourses, with three sections being considered as independent link sections, one at the rhetorical center of the book, one after the first discourse in the first half of the book, and one after the first discourse in the second half of the book. Thereby Mawlānā indicates that the book can be considered as comprising two halves. But look further and one can see that the first half is reflected in the second half, but in reverse order and at a higher level. Discourse One, the beginning of the spiritual path and concerned with killing when it is the Will of God, is in parallel with Discourse Twelve, which is the conclusion of the path and concerned with not killing when it is not the Will of God. Discourses Two and Eleven are parallel through the theme of seeing: the Jewish king, who cannot see reality

[1] See Seyed Ghahreman Safavi and Simon Weightman, *Rumi's Mystical Design: Reading The* Mathnawī, *Book One* (Albany: SUNY, 2009).

[2] In a lecture entitled "Mawlānā's Missing *Maqālah*s," delivered to the Rumi symposium at the Rumi Institute in the Near East University, Lefkosa, Cyprus, in December 2005.

because he sees double, is contrasted with Zayd who sees too much and has to be reined in by the Prophet. Discourses Three and Ten are parallel

Figure One: A Synoptic View of Book One

Discourse One	The King and the Handmaiden [9]
Link	The Greengrocer and the Parrot [1]
Discourse Two	The Jewish King Who for Bigotry's Sake Used to Slay Christians [24]
Discourse Three	Another Jewish King Who Tried to Destroy the Religion of Jesus [7]
Discourse Four	The Lion, the Beasts, and the Hare [34]
Discourse Five	The Caliph 'Umar and the Ambassador of Rūm [8]
Discourse Six	The Merchant and the Parrot [12]
Link	Explanation of the tradition: *"Whatever God Wills Comes to Pass"* [1]
Discourse Seven	The Story of the Harper [12]
Link	The Two Angels [1]
Discourse Eight	The Caliph, the Arab of the Desert, and His Wife [32]
Discourse Nine	The Lion, the Wolf, and the Fox [6]
Discourse Ten	Joseph and the Mirror [11]
Discourse Eleven	The Vision of Zayd [6]
Discourse Twelve	'Alī and the Infidel Knight [9]

through the theme of reflection back: the Jewish king, who is born of fire, perishes in fire in Three, while Ten is about polishing the heart to be a mirror to reflect Divine Beauty back to God. Discourse Four and Nine are both lion stories, but in the first the lion is all ego, and in the second the lion is beyond ego. Discourses Five and Eight are both Caliph stories and share the themes of spiritual poverty and the role of the Shaykh. Finally, Discourses Six and Seven are parallel through the theme of self-blaming.[3]

[3] That Mawlānā intended these discourses to be read in parallel and as pairs is apparent from the numbers of sections in the discourses. The sequence 9, 24, 7, 34, 8, 12, 12, 32, 6, 11, 6, 9, is random and without numerological significance. Add the numbers of sections in the pairs of parallel discourses and it yields a sequence which is numerologically significant: 18, 30, 18, 40, 40, 24. Eighteen is the Mevlevi number above all others, and

This arrangement, with the second half reflecting the first half in reverse but at a higher level, is called *chiasmus* and was a well-established literary convention. In particular, it focuses attention to the center, which is where the inner crisis, message, or climax is to be found. Mawlānā, in fact, employs great versatility and sophistication in his poetic structures in the *Mathnawī*, as becomes apparent when the internal structures of the discourses are examined.[4] Even when two discourses have the same number of sections, there is a difference in the arrangement. Discourses Six and Seven in Book One both have twelve sections, but the arrangement is for Discourse Six, a, b, c, d, e, f, f*, e*, d*, c*, b*, a*, and the arrangement for Discourse Seven is a, b, c, d, e, f, a*, b*, c*, d*, e*, f*. Equally rich and varied is Mawlānā's attendant use of parallelism. Parallelism is the literary exploitation of the non-linear relationship of correspondence, and since there are many ways that literary elements can correspond—phonologically, lexically, semantically, and thematically, for example—the range of usage covered by the term is extremely wide. A full treatment of Mawlānā's use of parallelism and chiasmus in Book One has already been published.[5] The task here and now is to consider Book Two and initially to identify the discourses.

In *Figure Two*, the discourses of Book Two are set out. Discourses Five, Six, Seven, and Eight are all narrative unities and readily identify

the number of lines in the opening Song of the Reed. Six is the first perfect number, the number of days for Creation, and also the number of books in the *Mathnawī*. Forty has great religious significance in Middle Eastern cultures. The sequence is three times six, five times six, three times six, forty, forty, four times six. Whatever further significance this might have, it is definitely Mawlānā's confirmation that the pairs are to be read in parallel and that they have a non-linear correspondence.

[4] Not only are the sections in each discourse organized by parallelism and chiasmus, as well as the discourses in each book, but the books themselves are also so organized. Thus the first discourse in Book One is in parallel with the last discourse in Book Six, indeed it actually refers to it. The first discourse in Book Two has *taqlīd*, imitation, as a major theme, and *taqlīd* is the subject of the last discourse of Book Five. In the last discourse in Book Two, the duck is used as a symbol for living in both worlds, because it can go on land and in water. Book Five begins with the duck, this time symbolizing greed, because it spends its time with its bill in the mud looking for food. The effect of Book One being organized in parallel and chiasmically with Book Six, Book Two with Book Five, and Book Three with Book Four, is to create a hinged mirror with Books One, Two, and Three, the first half of the work, being reflected back in mirror image by Books Six, Five, and Four. The hinge is the love story that runs across from Book Three to Book Four, the only example of a discourse spreading across two books. Thus the *Mathnawī* quite literally hinges on Love, and the mirror, such an important feature of Mawlānā's spiritual methodology, is embodied in the very structure of his work.

[5] See note 1 above.

themselves, and Discourse Three is marked at the beginning and the end by the headings, although the actual story is delayed until Book Five. Discourse One has an obvious beginning, and the clear parallelism of the

Figure Two: A Synoptic View of Book Two

The Proem	(verses 1-111)
Discourse One	On Not Seeing Reality (112-584) [12]
Discourse Two	The Insolvent Iblīs and the King's Choice of Slave (585-1046) [7]
Discourse Three	The Envious Emirs and Dhū'l-Nūn's "Madness" (1047-1600) [9]
Discourse Four	Different Blindnesses and Moses and the Shepherd (1601-1931) [7]
Discourse Five	The Fool Who Trusted the Bear (1932-2140) [8]
Discourse Six	Muḥammad and the Sick Companion (2141-2603) [14]
Discourse Seven	Iblīs and Mu'āwiya (2604-2792) [14]
Link Section	Misdirection and the Escape of the Thief (2793-2824)
Discourse Eight	The Mosque of Opposition (2825-3026) [8]
Discourse Nine	Fear, Appearance, and Reality (3027-3209) [8]
Discourse Ten	On Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham and Others (3210-3423) [6]
Discourse Eleven	The Dervish Accused of Theft and Others (3424-3572) [5]
Discourse Twelve	On Seeing Reality (3573-3810) [12]

two parts of the story of Jesus and the bones declares the discourse to have twelve sections. This is confirmed by thematic mapping and an analysis of the correspondences and parallelisms. If Discourse One has twelve sections, it would be expected from the example of Book One that Discourse Twelve would also have twelve sections and analysis confirms that thematically the last twelve sections form a coherent whole. From this basis it is possible to identify in Book Two twelve discourses, each organized by a chiasmic structure of some form and by parallelism.[6]

[6] Only one section creates a problem, "The Desert Arab Being Rebuked by the Philosopher for Putting Sand in His Sack." This section could be the last section in Discourse Nine, the

Figure Two below shows the synoptic reading of Book Two, identifying the twelve discourses, showing the verse numbers in Nicholson's text in round brackets, and the number of sections in each discourse in square brackets. Notice that the number of verses in the Proem, 111, is the same as the number of sections in the book. This could be typical of foreshadowing or could be accidental.

Just as in Book One, the discourses in Book Two are similarly in parallel and chiasmic. Discourses One and Twelve, apart from being the beginning and the end of the book, have the common overall concern with seeing or not seeing reality. Discourses Two and Eleven both have accusations of theft and deal, *inter alia*, with gluttony. Discourses Three and Ten both deal with things being topsy-turvy and back to front in the relation between this world and the spiritual world. Discourses Four and Nine are both concerned with various kind of blindness. Discourses Five and Eight both deal with discernment, or its lack, and the pointlessness of oaths. Discourses Six and Seven have each Companions of the Prophet and the theme of self-blaming.

It is now possible to examine the question of spiritual progression. In the previous paper,[7] which dealt only with Book One, it was pointed out that the first four discourses were concerned with the *nafs-i ammāra* (the "self that commands" to evil), the next four with the *nafs-i lawwāma* (the "blaming self"), and the last four with the stages and procedures necessary to culminate in the *nafs-i muṭma'inna* (the "self at peace" with the spirit) in Discourse Twelve. Thereby Mawlānā systematically unfolds the journey along the spiritual path, the *sulūk*. The first discourse, the King and the Handmaiden, sets out the human dilemma of the *rūḥ*, the spirit, being associated with the *nafs*, the selfhood, and presents the solution, which serves as the general introduction to the whole of the *Mathnawī* as well as to Book One. There then follow two discourses about two Jewish kings which are illustrative of the worst kind of the *nafs-i ammāra*. Discourse Four is where the Hare, symbolic of *'aql*, intellect, tricks the lion, the *nafs*, into seeing itself in the well. Narratively this leads to the demise of the lion, but it symbolizes an initial awakening, since Discourse Five has a potential *sālik*, the Ambassador of Byzantium, meeting his shaykh, 'Umar, for the first time, with

first section in Discourse Ten, or be independent like a link section. Interestingly, the only section in Book One that has a similarly ambiguous status, "How Kings Seat Sufis in Front of Themselves," occurs in exactly the same position. Thereby both of these sections is given a particular emphasis by the rhetorical structuring, and will deserve further attention.

[7] See note 2 above.

excellent results. With Discourse Six the merchant who blames himself for killing his own pet parrot at home and other parrots in India through his insensitive speech, is clearly the *nafs-i lawwāma*. The escaped parrot shows him a new way, and that is its pretended death, symbolic of *niyāz*, needfulness or self-abasement. The discourse does not show the merchant transforming through this advice, but *niyāz* is the gateway from the first half of the book, which deals with the developing but untransformed *nafs*, to the second half that deals with the transformed *nafs*, as is made clear in the wonderful section at the rhetorical center of the book, headed "*Whatever God Wills, comes to pass*."

The second half of Book One begins in the Universal spiritual world and only in the second half of Discourse Seven is the story of the old harpist told, clearly symbolic of the *nafs-i lawwāma*. God sends 'Umar to him, who explains he should stop his breast-beating lamentation now, since it prolongs self-consciousness and is a self-indulgence. Discourse Eight completes the development of the blaming self with the harmonization of the *'aql*, intellect, the blamer, with the *nafs*, the blamed. Discourse Nine deals with the elimination of "I"-consciousness and the importance of the period of a year's suffering in separation from the shaykh which was so crucial in Mawlānā's own spiritual transformation. Then there is the section mentioned in footnote 6 about placing oneself in front of a true shaykh or Perfect Man to act as a mirror to one's soul, followed by the discourse on polishing the heart to act as a mirror to reflect back God's Beauty, by removing spiritual pride, arrogance, and self-conceit, on the one hand, and analogy, surmise, and opinion, on the other. Both sets are problems which cloud the mirror of the heart and prevent a direct experiencing of God's Reality and Beauty. Discourse Eleven is initially about Zayd, who experienced illumination and wished to speak of what he saw, until the Prophet restrained him explaining that when the reflection of Reality penetrates a person, it is better to put the mirror back in its case. He explained that all the organs, powers, and parts of a transformed person are under the control of the heart and subject to the command of the spirit. Zayd, it implies, has only to ask inwardly and he won't see such things, his mirror will be sheathed. The central message is that God wishes for this concealment to encourage hope and fear and because it is better "they believe in the unseen." So better to let God's messengers and prophets do the speaking. It concludes: "When the throne of the heart is restored to soundness and purged of sensuality, thereon the Merciful God is seated on His Throne. After this God controls the heart without intermediary, since the heart has been given this direct relationship." This is the ultimate ideal station for the mystic, when God is in control of his heart

and all that his heart controls. Discourse Twelve illustrates this station with the pure sincerity and submission of 'Alī.

Discourse One of Book Two presents a beautifully constructed, rich and sophisticated analysis of the *sālik*'s situation.[8] It spells out that desire,

[8] **A Synoptic View of Discourse One**

- **Section 1:** New moon; hair in eye; Iblis beguiles; stay awake; rank and wealth robbers.
- **Section 2:** Snake catcher's snake stolen; thief bitten, dies; owner glad God ignored his prayer.
- **Section 3:** Jesus and the bones; fool wanted them revived; God says fools are self-made.
- **Section 4:** Sufi entrusts his ass to the servant; the single mole of Divine Beauty.
- **Section 5:** Outer meaning not inner meaning interrupts the discourse.
- **Section 6:** Sufi's ass useless as servant ignored it; the Devil's agenda.
- **Section 7:** Falcon prefers Hell; says he has sinned; God's mercy depends on weeping.
- **Section 8:** Shaykh Aḥmad, creditors and halwa seller; weeping; didn't see its meaning.
- **Section 9:** Weep little or be blind; eye must see Divine Beauty or it is no use; Jesus.
- **Section 10:** Jesus; bones; lion kills fool; the eye; lamentation; blind imitation.
- **Section 11:** Peasant stroked ox in dark; really a lion; blind imitation not direct seeing.
- **Section 12:** Sufi lost his ass through blind imitation; desire is hair in the eye; greed.

This First Discourse then, with its twelve sections, structured into the four blocks dealing respectively with stupidity, being misled by appearances and outer form, weeping, and blind imitation, can be read sequentially as a sequence of comic anecdotes with comment. It can also be read synoptically, as addressed to the aspiring Sufi, the *sālik*, spelling out his dilemma, the real situation he is in, and the specific problems he faces together with solutions. In this reading the sections are taken in parallel pairs moving from the outside to the inside. The outer pair, Sections 1 and 12, are concerned with desire and how it prevents the apprehension of reality, first, through only seeing what one wants to see, second, through only seeing what one has learnt to see and do by imitation. The second parallel pairing, Sections 2 and 11, are thematically related through mistaken identity. In the first case the snake was mistaken for an asset instead of a deadly liability out of desire for wealth, and, in the second case, the lion, God, was mistaken for the comfortable, familiar ox because of *taqlīd*. The third parallel pairing, Sections 3 and 10 on the story of Jesus and the bones, is about wanting the wrong thing, first, because the fool asked for the Name to use himself, something quite beyond his capacity, and then asked Jesus to use it himself, instead of realizing he himself was inwardly dead and could have asked the friend of God to bring him alive instead of a stranger, and also for choosing to bring bones alive instead of the spirit. The fourth parallel pair, Sections 4 and 9, appear to be more hopeful in that they are both concerned with seeing reality, although in their contexts they are less so, since, in the first, the author suggests that the exposition of how *pīr*s see reality could be boring and wearisome to some, and, in the second, the suggestion that weeping will damage the eye frightens the ascetic. There is also the warning that spiritual power should not be used for the body or one's livelihood. The fifth parallel pair, Sections 5 and 8, are concerned with the inherent tendency to see the outer form as real and not the inner reality, whether in seeking the outer story, in the first case, or, in the second, in the creditors not seeing the reality of Shaykh Aḥmad's death-bed strategy. The final pair, Sections 6 and 7, are respectively concerned with what and whom one does trust but shouldn't, and what and whom one should trust but doesn't. In the first, the Sufi should not have trusted the words

stupidity (*ablahī*, punned with Iblīs, the Devil) and imitative, second-hand knowledge, *taqlīd*, prevent him from seeing reality. In consequence he cannot distinguish between an asset and a liability, and his mistaken identifications lead him to seek the wrong things. He has an inherent tendency to accept the outer appearance and not grasp the inner reality, which leads him to follow what and whom should not be trusted and not to follow what and whom should be trusted. His *nafs* prefers Hell to Heaven, and some of the worst episodes are perpetrated by Sufis within the *khānaqāh*. For each defect, however, a remedy is suggested. Discourse Two has the bankrupt Iblīs in the prison of this world eating all the spiritual food of the fellow prisoners. It deals with the unreality of "if only," offers a king distinguishing between a plausible, attractive but false slave and an ugly, unattractive but true one, but its central section is about the adulterous *nafs*. Discourse Three, which is about how back to front things are in this world, where spiritual kings are slaves or in prison, has as its central section a very strong episode on the need to kill the *nafs*. Discourse Four is about blindness: spiritual, philosophical, and religious, the last being Moses' blindness for which God rebukes him in the central section by explaining that what matters is the heart and love. As in Book One, therefore, the first four discourses are concerned with the *nafs-i ammāra*, with Discourse Four offering a relative lightening. As in Book One, Discourse Five is also about a potential pupil meeting a possible shaykh, but

of the servant, nor the servant himself, because that is the way Iblīs works, but he should have trusted his dreams and vision; the *sālik* should not trust those like the Sufi who are only Sufi in appearance and not in reality, nor the stranger, his own body and *nafs*, nor even holy words without the inner content and experience in those who use them, but he should be responsible for himself. In the second, the falcon should have trusted the king, God or the Perfect Man, and not the old crone, the world. The *sālik* should trust God and the shaykh, but as there is an inherent disposition in the *nafs* to prefer Hell to Heaven, the *sālik* separates himself from God through conceit, spiritual pride, and over-familiarity with God, whereas he should be penitent like the falcon, know himself, and be humble and sit with reverence, as well as feeling gratitude to Muḥammad and the religion, and seek to become free of the idol in himself and deliver his heart from idolatry. This final pair of sections, at the heart of the Discourse, contain, as would be expected, the heart of the *sālik*'s problem, as well as its solution: whether to follow Iblīs to unreality, or the Perfect Man or his shaykh to reality, within his own heart.

Synoptically then, the reading moves from the outer sections to the inner. The Discourse begins with desire preventing the seeing of reality; this leads, in turn, to mistaken identifications, which then leads to seeking the wrong things. It is possible to see reality, but there is an inherent tendency to accept the outer appearance and not the inner reality, which leads in turn to following what and whom should not be trusted, and not following what and whom should be trusted. Discourse One is a fairly complete diagnosis of the aspiring Sufi's situation, together with an analysis of seeing and not seeing reality, with which it is intimately connected.

in this instance the shaykh is rejected because the man is obsessed with his bear. Discourses Six and Seven are both about the *nafs-i lawwāma* and both refer to Companions of the Prophet. In Discourse Six, the *nafs* leads the Companion to take self-blame far too far, and, in Discourse Seven, Iblīs tries to prevent Mu'āwiya from experiencing self-blame at all. Discourse Eight is inwardly about the transformation which ends the stage of the *nafs-i lawwāma*, which is the harmonization of the *'aql* with the *nafs*, symbolized by both the seeker and the imitator finding their stray camels (wisdom).[9] Discourse Nine, which deals with the loss of "I"-consciousness in Book One, is here about fearing and recognizing one's own fault, one's impotence and weakness, and dropping one's cleverness, on the one hand, and glorifying God while realizing one's nothingness on the other. Discourse Ten is about the awakening of the spiritual senses, the beginning of illumination, and the spiritual properties and qualities of the shaykh and the friends of God. Discourse Eleven is about not being envious or critical of the friends of God, but rather reverential because for

[9] The literal, surface level of the religious law, *Sharī'a*, works quite clearly with no need for further exposition. It is the symbolic Sufi level which requires examination. The final verse, which warns the reader that there is a mosque of opposition within each person, can be taken as a general warning against hypocrisy on the literal level or it can be taken as a pointer that this discourse contains a symbolic inner content for the spiritual traveler. The splendid mosque can be regarded as a hypocritical persona, probably a seemingly pious one, constructed by the *nafs*, which seeks to be accepted and validated. The shaykh or Perfect Man can see perfectly well what the situation is and is courteous but, on God's urging, after a period of spiritual warfare, confronts the lies of the *nafs*. The companion is, as in the previous two discourses, an established *sālik*, who finds the shaykh's treatment of his venerable *nafs* too harsh, which creates a dilemma in his heart. Then he is shown in a vision the true state of his selfhood and he recognizes the necessity for the treatment. Knowing he should have been able to see this for himself, he begins to search for his stray camel, the faculty of discernment, the *'aql* or intellect, which can tell the good from the bad, the true from the false. In his search he is given all sorts of useless clues from various rascals of his *nafs*, which is beautifully observed by Mawlānā. Section Five and Section Six, on discordant doctrines and on making trial of everything so that the good and evil in it becomes apparent, are even more appropriate on the inner level than on the outer. The remedy suggested in the first section is to find the one true dervish and attach oneself to him; in the second to find the touchstone, the faculty of discernment, the *'aql*, which drank the milk of Wisdom in eternity. Section Seven introduces a new character, the imitator, who didn't know he had even lost a camel, but joined in the search in imitation. When the seeker found his camel, the imitator found his own and was transformed. The imitator is clearly the purged and conscious *nafs*, which had found it own guidance and was able to become at peace with God. In this way the *'aql* and the *nafs* are brought into harmony just as they were in the story of the Arab and his wife in the corresponding discourse in Book One. When the Prophet ordered the destruction of the mosque, it was not the selfhood the shaykh destroyed, but the false and hypocritical persona and all its pretensions. The *nafs* and the *'aql* in harmony were then able to advance to the next stage of transformation.

them everything is lawful. The *sālik* is not yet perfect, nor a prophet, so should remain silent and not attempt to set up shop alone. Leadership is poison. Discourse Twelve is about seeing reality and the spiritual world, from the viewpoint of the *nafs-i muṭma'inna*.

This brief survey has shown how Mawlānā has systematically traced the spiritual path in Book One, without too much emphasis on the difficulties. In Book Two he traces the same territory, using the same format, but paying particular attention to the challenges that arise at each point, usually from Iblīs/*nafs*. In one sense, Book Two is about whom one befriends and associates with: with the *nafs*, with the friends of God, and with Almighty God. In another sense, it is about progressively approaching and seeing reality, but in the final analysis these two amount to the same thing. In the Preface, he states that wisdom is rationed and used with consideration, because if too much were known of the benefits, the *sālik* would be unable to do anything. Equally, however, it could be said that if the *sālik* were aware of all the difficulties at the outset, he might never embark on the path. It is not just a question of progressive realism from Discourse One to Discourse Twelve, but also of a progression of realism from Book One to Book Two. This raises the question of Mawlānā's design.

The opening sentence of the *Mathnawī* affirms that it is the roots of the roots of the roots of Religion. This is generally understood to refer to the levels of the Canon Law of Islam (*Sharī'a*), the Sufi Path (*Ṭarīqa*), and the divine Reality (*Ḥaqīqa*). Mawlānā constantly affirms that beside this mundane world, there is another spiritual world, which is a beautiful unity and the cause and purpose of whatever appears in this world, which is itself only a shadow of the real spiritual world. The spiritual world is unseen and must remain so by God's decree.

Since the Sufi has to live in both worlds, how does Mawlānā articulate all this in his design? This mundane world of the senses is represented by the surface, literal text itself, which moves naturally and successively from verse to verse and theme to theme. Its sequentiality is in the direction of time's arrow, so it can be represented as a line; its literary mode is exposition; and its level is that of the *Sharī'a*.

The spiritual world is eternal, so it is symbolized by the circle; its literary mode is therefore ring-composition, that is chiasmus and parallelism; and its level is that of *Ḥaqīqa*.[10]

[10] Ring composition through parallelism and chiasmus organizes the work as a totality, the books internally, and the discourses internally, but never intrudes on the surface text. The verses within the sections are untouched. In this way the overarching organization stops at the level of the section heading. Thereby it is able to provide the primary causation and

Participating in both worlds is the Sufi, whose spiritual progress can be symbolized as a spiral, continually return to the beginning again, but each time, it is hoped, at a higher level. Here the literary mode is symbolism and the level is that of the *Ṭarīqa*. The literary model of this design was almost certainly derived from the poet Niẓāmī, of whom it is known Mawlānā was fond and with whom there was a family connection.[11] But only Mawlānā had the spiritual insight, the wisdom, and the poetic control to accomplish this extraordinary work. I am grateful for the opportunity to say thank you to Mawlānā for his many years of labor and his astonishing achievement, and for all it has given to me and to many, many others over the centuries.

rationale just as the spiritual world does with the mundane world of the senses. Parallelism and chiasmus are perfectly fitted to represent the spiritual world, since they mean that every part of the work looks to every other part and provides the inner unity. They also produce beautiful structures while yet remaining unseen.

[11] This is dealt with more fully in our *Rumi's Mystical Design*. First, the family connection is through Fakhr al-Dīn Bahrām Shāh, the Prince of Erzincan, whose wife became the patron of Rumi's father when they first arrived in eastern Anatolia. It was under Fakhr al-Dīn Bahrām Shāh's patronage that Niẓāmī had written his didactic spiritual *mathnawī*, the *Makhzan al-asrār*, "The Treasury of Secrets," a fact that the family must have known during the four years they spent there. The first nineteen sections of this poem are arranged chiasmically with clear parallelism, as well as emphasis being given by the central position. But it is in the *Haft Paykar* of Niẓāmī that the combination of sequential and chiasmic composition is most fully developed on a macro-compositional scale. This has been examined by Julie Scott Meisami in her *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* and in the introduction to her beautiful verse translation of this work in Oxford World's Classics. For these reasons, and because the textual condition of the works of Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār remains uncertain, our *Rumi's Mystical Design* sees in Niẓāmī at least a temporary answer to the question of the immediate origins of this compositional style. Then in the Foreword, kindly contributed by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, he recalls the words of his own old teacher the late Hadi Ha'iri who was known as the greatest authority on the *Mathnawī* of his day: "Do not think that the 'body' of the *Mathnawī* has no order (*niẓām*). Rather, it is the poet Niẓāmī who created the structured body into which Rumi breathed the spirit (*rūḥ*) to create the *Mathnawī*."

In Memoriam: Gökalp Kâmil

On a visit to Istanbul almost nine years ago, Gökalp Kâmil and I sat above the Spice Bazaar in Pandeli Restaurant and gazed across the Golden Horn at the Genoese Tower in Pera. As he spoke about his childhood in Paphos, about his escape from Cyprus to England as a school boy after he witnessed a murder committed by EOKA terrorists, and about the years that he spent in London, he decided to call a Lebanese friend who had known him as a young businessman. In reply to a question about the path that his life had taken since his return to Cyprus, Gökalp began to describe the Rumi Institute, only to hear his account of the history of Sufism interrupted by peals of laughter from the telephone. "Of all people! You have become a dervish!"

The incredulity of his old friend was hardly surprising. The young man whom he had known had been an entrepreneur, a night club owner, a property developer, and eventually a tycoon who lived in a glamorous apartment above Park Lane, ordered suits by the dozen from Anderson and Sheppard, and drove a Rolls Royce automobile. His interests had never been confined to this world, however. He had also been an earnest student of John Bennett, the former British intelligence agent in Istanbul who had done so much to introduce the study of Sufism to the United Kingdom, and he spent months at Coombe Springs listening to Bennett's accounts of Sufi tradition and helping to build a community in which a spiritual discipline that had been declared illegal in the Republic of Turkey was being given a new life. In the process, he acquired a keen sense of why the loss of Ottoman Sufism had impoverished the cultural life of the Turkish people, not only in Turkey itself but also in Cyprus. In time, he would work to remove what he saw as a form of amnesia that he believed could undermine the social fabric of the island on which he had been born.

Gökalp and I were introduced several weeks after I arrived in Cyprus by Bruce McGowan, the former director of the American Research Institute in Turkey and one of the foremost authorities at the time on Ottoman economic history. Gökalp was excited about a new idea and he was keen to share it. The old Mevlevihane near the Kyrenia Gate in Nicosia was being restored and would soon be opened as a museum of Mevlevi culture. Gökalp believed that the event should be marked by an academic conference to discuss the place of religion in society and he believed that Near East University would be an ideal sponsor and venue. With this goal in mind, Gökalp, Bruce, and I marched one day into the office of Şenol Bektaş, the Vice President of the University, and presented

the idea to him. Twelve years later, it is difficult to recall how very different the political climate had been at the time and the real courage that was required to embrace such a controversial project. Without the unwavering support of Şenol Bey and of the President of the University, Suat Günsel, a conference that attempted to consider the contribution that religion can make even to secular societies would never have been possible.

On the basis of this conference, whose popularity with students and members of the general public served to reassure all the relevant ministries, the Rumi Institute would be established as the first university department in the Turkish world dedicated to the study of Sufism. It represented a remarkable innovation and its success was due in large part to the wise counsel and enthusiastic participation of Talât Sait Halman, a poet and scholar whose long experience of diplomatic as well as literary and academic life has given him a unique authority that he has used with great effect to encourage the study of Sufi poets such as Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Yūnus Emre.

As the founder of the Rumi Institute, Gökalp would display a marvelous ability to organize conferences, concerts, and performances of the Mevlevi sema, tasks that depended upon the skills that he had acquired as an entrepreneur and impresario as well as his dedication to the history of spirituality. Everyone associated with the Institute will agree that it could be almost impossible to refuse a request that Gökalp was determined to see accepted. Beginning with Nurhan Atasoy, the doyenne of Turkish art historians and the leading expert on many subjects including the costumes of Ottoman Sufi orders, a series of distinguished scholars began to arrive at the Rumi Institute from Turkey and then from the United Kingdom, France, and the United States.

The conference from which Gökalp derived the greatest sense of achievement was not presented at Nicosia, however, but at Konya. When the decision was taken by the Turkish Ministry of Culture to honor in 2007 the 800th anniversary of the birth of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Gökalp began to talk to Erdoğan Erol and Naci Bakırcı, the Director and Vice Director of the Mevlana Museum. He suggested that an unprecedented step be taken. Although conferences were being planned in several Turkish cities and indeed elsewhere in the world, he proposed that the Rumi Institute organize a conference within the Museum itself, only a few steps from the tomb of Rūmī and the Mevlevi semahane. The idea was dismissed as impractical and even as presumptuous by those who did not share his vision. However, they had underestimated his perseverance and the ease with which obstacles could be overcome once he enlisted the support of Talât Halman alongside Erdoğan Erol and Naci Bakırcı.

In addition to its immediate effect on the audience that gathered in the Mevlana Museum, the conference had two lasting results, both of which have depended upon the perseverance and editorial acumen of Leonard Lewisohn. The first is the *Mawlana Rumi Review*, which has been recognized as a unique publication and is maintaining the highest academic standards. Its fifth issue is now being prepared for delivery to the printer. The second is the present volume of essays, *The Philosophy of Ecstasy*, which has grown from the lectures that were presented at the Mevlana Müzesi in December 2007.

Shortly before Gökalp died, a letter was delivered to him from Alan Williams, who had spoken at the conference in Konya and is therefore one of the contributors to the present volume. The letter sought to assure Gökalp that more people than he might have realized were grateful that he had founded the Rumi Institute, describing it in evocative terms as a garden within which anyone devoted to the mystical teachings of Rūmī would be refreshed by a very real sense of brotherhood that brought a new life to the austere intellectualism offered in most university classrooms and lecture halls. Gökalp was delighted with the letter, and indeed it would be difficult to imagine a better description of his legacy.

Although Gökalp Kâmil left this world at the age of 72 on July 11, 2012, after struggling with a long and difficult illness, he will be remembered with great affection by his family and by his friends in England and in Cyprus. Anyone associated with the Rumi Institute will remember him not only with affection but also with gratitude.

—Roderick Grierson
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Jalal al-Din Rumi, who wrote in Persian and died in 1273 at Konya, in what is now Turkey, is the greatest mystical poet of Islam and one of the most prolific poets in any language. He has been the best-selling poet in the United States for several decades. The immense appeal of Rumi's poetic and spiritual genius led UNESCO to declare 2007, the 800th anniversary of his birth, as "International Rumi Year."

In this highly informative collection of essays, sponsored by the Rumi Institute at Near East University in Cyprus, twelve leading authorities examine the meaning and structure of his great spiritual epic, the *Mathnawi*, and the lyric poetry of his *Divan*, as well as contextualize the world in which Rumi lived and taught.

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